Reading Contemporary Indonesian Muslim Women Writers

Representation, Identity and Religion of Muslim Women in Indonesian Fiction

Diah Ariani Arimbi

Amsterdam University Press

UNIVERSITAS AIRLANGGA

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Reading Contemporary Indonesian Muslim Women Writers

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Brother, this is for you!

In loving memory of Bismoko Yunus Indirawan (1968-2007):
a brother, a best friend and an inspiration

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- Abidah El Khalieqy's Struggles of Islamic Feminism Through Literary Writings
- Politicizing Piety: Women's Rights and Roles in the Tarbiyah Movement in Indonesia

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Introduction

Women, gender and Islam will always be a contested sight because women's *locus* in relation to Islam is problematic when their status is manifested through the eyes of practiced Islam. Various interpretations of Islam have managed to define, locate and perhaps entrap women in certain fixed categories. Amina Wadud and her attempts to break the hegemony of patriarchal *fiqh* is an example of the problematic female position in Islam. Her endeavour to be an *imam*, by leading a Friday prayer in New York, triggered strong controversy.[1] The possibility of a woman leading prayer for a male and female congregation resulted in outbursts from Muslim leaders and Islamic scholars. However, whereas many religious authorities condemned her action, several others supported her. What Wadud had attempted to do clearly brings gender issues into focus as the idea of a female *imam* for a mixed gender congregation remains a controversial issue.

Amina Wadud is not the only woman struggling to conduct new readings of the Islamic teachings. The 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi, an Iranian Muslim woman judge, has shown that Wadud is not working alone. Ebadi, the first Muslim Nobel Laureate woman from an Islamic state focuses on the congruence of the discourse of human rights and Islam and its demanded actions. Ebadi believes that her use of Islam as a strong support in articulating and advancing human rights is justified. She states:

> [the] divine book (the Qur'an) sees the mission of all prophets as that of inviting all human beings to uphold justice (...) The discriminatory plight of women in Islamic societies, whether in the sphere of civil law or in the realm of social, political and cultural justice, has its roots in the male-dominated culture prevailing in these societies, *not in Islam*.[2]

For Ebadi, fundamental human rights and Islam are interfaced. She argues that Islam should promote and safeguard human's rights for all mankind, irrespective of differences, be it race, gender, faith, nationality or social status. She acknowledges that Islam has been at times historically misused and complicit in the perpetuation of discrimination.

In her work as a judge, lawyer, lecturer, writer and activist, Ebadi believes that Islam can be a close ally in promoting justice and equality.

The number of discursive orientations in which women can locate their self-determined political and ideological goals has risen significantly within a variety of different social and cultural contexts without assuming a fixed or essential *a priori* understanding of what it means to be a woman. Muslim women's movements across the Muslim world have also become a pivotal part in the global women's movement. The internet and mobile phone created networks of transnational feminisms where exchanges and interflow of information take place. Indonesian Muslim women are also part of these transnational networks.

Women's centres promoting women's autonomy and self-actualisation have been established in various urban areas throughout the archipelago.[3] Like their Muslim sisters elsewhere Muslim women in Indonesia also attempt to construct, regulate and structure their own subjectivities in order to remap the ways Muslim women have been discursively represented, and policed, within social categories. The establishment of women's centres in Indonesia does not mean that women no longer suffer discrimination. In rural regions particularly, restrictions and limitations are still applied to women. Many aspects of women's lives are still heavily circumscribed by social codes that are often discriminatory. What she will be, how she will behave, her interaction within her family or outside familial relations, her life occupation, her education are all determined by the boundaries of cultural/social space defined for her in her society, and each discriminatory measure degrades the quantum of autonomy she can exercise and serves to silence and immobilise women. However, not all women are merely passive victims. Those who struggle always find ways to resist and to challenge patriarchal practices, laws, and customs. They seek to challenge the identity imposed on women in the specificity by encouraging women to analyse and reformulate their own identity, and by so doing to assume greater control of their lives; greater self-autonomy. Indonesian Muslim women believe that it is only when women start assuming the rights to define for themselves the parameter of their own identity and stop accepting unconditionally and without question what is presented to them as the 'correct' religious, social, cultural or political identity that they will be able to effectively challenge the corpus of patriarchal articulation imposed on them. Their resistance against discrimination is then continuous and manifested in numerous shapes, creating a range of responses in the social and political arena that vary from the exclusively secular to the exclusively theological, with numerous alternatives in between.

Indonesian Muslim women's identity and subjectivity are not created simply from a single variable; rather, they are shaped by various dis-

courses that often compete with and parallel each other. Discourses such as patriarchal discourses circumscribing the social engagement and public life of Muslim women portray them in narrow gendered parameters in which women occupy rather limited public roles. Western colonial discourse often constructs women as oppressed and backward. Each such discourse indeed denies women's agency and maturity to form their own definition of identity within the broad Islamic parameters. Rewriting women's own identities are articulated in various forms from writing to visualisation, from fiction to non-fiction. All expressions signify women's ways to react against the silencing and muteness that have long been imposed upon women's agency.

In Indonesian literary culture today, numerous women writers have represented in their writings women's own ways to look at their own selves. Literary representations become one way among others trying to portray women's strategies that will give them maximum control over their lives and bodies. Muslim women writers in Indonesia have shown through their representations of Muslim women in their writings that Muslim women in Indonesian settings are capable of undergoing a self-definition process. However, from their writings, too, readers are reminded that although most women portrayed are strong and assertive it does not necessarily mean that they are free from oppression.

This book is about Muslim women and gender-related issues in Indonesia. It focuses on the writings of four contemporary Indonesian Muslim women writers: Titis Basino P.I., Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim, Abidah El Khalieqy and Helvy Tiana Rosa, by primarily looking at how gender is constructed and in turn constructs the identity, roles and status of Muslim women in Indonesia and how such relations are portrayed by selected writers. This book aims firstly to explore and map gender-related issues presented in the narratives of contemporary Muslim women writers in Indonesia; secondly, to investigate how such issues are presented, that is, how Muslim women in Indonesia are portrayed in the narratives; thirdly, to investigate a variety of the aesthetic forms and narrative styles and structures employed in these writings, recognising how issues of aesthetic are intertwined inseparably with issues of gender constructions, power, representation, identity and prevailing ideology; fourthly, to find out how similar and/or different gender issues that Muslim women writers in the global environments and in Indonesian contexts have written, and finally to investigate how the writings of these Indonesian Muslim women narrative writers have sustained, challenged, worked and reworked the perceptions of Muslim women, roles and status in the Islamic societies.

Among Muslim women writers in Indonesia, these four writers – Titis Basino P.I., Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim, Abidah El Khalieqy and Hel-

vy Tiana Rosa – are prolific authors spanning from the older to younger generation. Their works produce rich sources of identity politics of Muslim women in Indonesia, covering issues of authenticity, representation and power that are inextricably intertwined in a variety of aesthetic forms and narrative structures. The choice of the authors for subject analysis was purposely selected as these four writers are Muslims and their works are widely published; yet their names are often forgotten in the canon of contemporary Indonesian literary culture which is dominated by younger generation of authors categorised as *sastra wangi* ('perfumed' literature)[4] and the newly emerging *chick lit*.[5] There are certainly other writers than these selected four, and like them too they are often ignored.[6] The writers I have chosen have published numerous fictions, yet their names are seldom acknowledged, and such is the primary reason for selecting them as research objects. Each author represents their generation in an Indonesian literary period. Although such selection fails to include all writers of all generations outside the mainstream, these four bring multiple representations of Indonesian Muslim women in fiction outside *sastra wangi* or *chick lit*. Not all of these writers' works are selected; the choice of works is based on writings which offer sources adequate to discuss issues affecting Indonesian women. In the discussion, the authors will be referred to by their first names only. This is partly because Indonesians rarely have a family name and also because these authors prefer to be called by their first names.

This book focuses on the textual analysis of selected texts of the four writers mentioned and the politics surrounding those texts that become the material and ideological context of the production of those texts. Nevertheless, as an adjunct analysis, scrutinising how far and how familiar the selected texts involve and have an effect on the selected readers, questionnaires were distributed in order to obtain readers' responses on selected authors. Reader-response is crucial as it is meant to show how texts are constructed and, further, how the same texts impact on their readers. This book then will look at the authors, their texts and responses of their readers in order to have more complex readings of the texts.

Reading Women Reading Writings: Feminist Literary Criticism at Stake

A feminist interrogation of literature is always a contextually grounded undertaking, for a text cannot be studied in pristine isolation.[7] Historical realities have to be considered. Such realities are crucial in analysing the power of words and the ways in which those words are pre-

sented. Feminist writings are executed in broader political contexts and the sorts of experiences that women have are called upon throughout history. The problematic of the political nature of these writings and their writers is indeed of interest. In a broader sense, the expressed presence of a subject in the narratives, the subjective 'I' of the author in depicting, working or reworking, even challenging the qualities adhering to the questions of 'feminine' or 'masculine' is an object of scrutiny. The authority embodied by the presence of the author in the narrative, her ideology, and her responses reflect the political stand of the author, thus producing or reproducing a received construction of women. The disengagement of literature and literary production from a wide range of historical realities will certainly neglect the fact that literary production emerges from a certain time and space.

The Politics of Literature

Literature is political, Judith Fetterley argues in 'Introduction to the Politics of Literature'.[8] She further claims that power is the main issue and the core of power in literary politics is consciousness:

> Consciousness is power. To create a new understanding of our literature is to make possible a new effect of that literature on us. And to make possible a new effect is in turn to provide the conditions for changing the culture that the literature reflects. To expose and question that complex of ideas and mythologies about women and men which exist in our society and are confirmed in our literature is to make the system of power embodied in the literature open not only to discussion even to change. Such questioning and exposure can, of course, be carried on only by a consciousness radically different from the one that informs that literature. Such a closed system cannot be opened up from within but only from without. It must be entered into from a point of view which questions its values and assumptions and which has its investment in making available to consciousness precisely that which the literature wishes to keep hidden. Feminist criticism provides that point and embodies that consciousness.[9]

Applying a 'new consciousness' of feminist readings offers new ways of reading and interpreting literary writings.

Literature may function as a means to promote political agendas, either against or pro prevailing ideologies but that does not automatically mean that it contributes to one's understanding of political agen-

das. Politics may exist thematically in the text but it is also embedded in its language, thus a reader's participation is necessary for its political exposure. In this sense, text is political as its readers complicate its meaning as soon as s/he enters the picture. The political content in the text and its relationships to what an author has in her/his mind are no longer the only ways by which interpretations are made. The reader's entrance to the text creates text-reader relationships that the author is not aware of. The politics of the text – the politics of literature – makes sense when a text is read and begins to exist for its readers.

Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore posit that there is no such thing as a neutral approach to literature. All readings/interpretations are political.[10] Feminist literary critique may question, among other things, the ways a particular text represents women, how it portrays gender relations, how it labels sexual difference, how it terms power-relations between different gender roles, and so forth. Even if a particular text says nothing about gender relations, depicts no women at all, the text can still be critiqued through a feminist reading. Belsey and Moore further remark on the political role of feminist readers:

> A feminist does not necessarily read in order to praise or to blame, to judge or to censor. More commonly she sets out to assess how the text invites its readers, as members of a specific culture, to understand what it means to be a woman or man, and so encourages them to reaffirm or to challenge existing cultural norms.[11]

Besley and Moore have also added that feminist criticism has a pivotal role in deconstructing timeless meanings that literature carries within the norms of traditional literary criticism. Literature is no longer a special category that simply depicts reality, embodying timeless truths and neutral agendas, and thus ceases to be seen unbiased. As de Beauvoir states, 'the ways in which the questions are put, the points of view assumed, presuppose a relativity of interest; all characteristics imply values, and every objective description, so called, implies an ethical background.'[12] Writing is no longer an individual phenomenon but a social and cultural institution, in which its social contexts are more than just shadowy backgrounds. Literature becomes a manifestation in which its various forms are subjective to the ways societies comprehend and identify themselves and the world they live in or imagine. 'Re-visioning' – to borrow Adrienne Rich's term – serves as a new way of looking at constructions of women in any art form:

> Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for us

> more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of her refusal to self-destructiveness of male dominated-society. A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us; and how we can begin to see – and therefore live – afresh.[13]

Perhaps, Rich' s claim of re-visioning an old text should be extended to *all texts*, old and new. Any given text is to be re-examined with new critical eyes in order to awaken a 'new consciousness'. In this way, feminist critique serves as a powerful naming that free women to produce their own readings, appropriating different meanings at different times – even from the same text – according to changing assumptions and conditions.

Between Facts and Fiction: The Problematic Images of Women in Fiction

Can fiction be seen as a true representation of actual life? The notion that a clear division exists between fiction and reality is problematic. On the one hand, it is argued that if there is no real woman in the literature, only representation, then there is no one to liberate. Yet, there are still women who experience sexual discrimination, who are not able to find jobs because they are women, who are denied their rights because they are women, who are written out of history because they are women. On the other hand, taking literature as fact will negate the assistance of the imaginative creative process of the author in the writing. A literary product does not automatically duplicate the real. For this reason, it is simply a representation of the real.

Further, a singularity of representation cannot be asserted for that ignores the dynamic of social-historical notions of women crossing the spacio-temporality of their existence. As identity is an on-growing process, a fixation of identity reflective of all women of all ages is an absolute impossibility:

> Literary works give images of women that are not absolutely identical, and the differences among them must be significant. Historical flux and change should not be prematurely ended in symbolic stasis that women can suffer once and for all an iden-

> tity fixation on the level of style, releasing action only to 'the woman' of the semiotic.[14]

Literary analysis must take the role of the structures of ideology that lie within literature. Ideology does not appear as mere ideology, but, rather, as a subtle network representing 'the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.'[15] In this respect, literature is ideological in its nature, '[i]n imaginative works a moving ideology can be fixed and brought to consciousness and its contradictions can be made visible.'[16] Perhaps, it may be added that in literary works, the structures of ideology are not only thematic but disperse in every element of the work. The inclusion of analysis of ideology in literary analysis is therefore crucial:

> Criticism using the notion of ideology focuses both on what is stressed as intentional and what appears subliminal, discordant and unintentional. With the notion, we can read against the grain, not aiming to uncover a truth but investigating how a transcendental concept of truth was formed at all. Literature inevitably colludes with ideology, which is in turn inscribed in literary forms, style, conventions, genres and institution of literary production. But it does not simply affirm, and it can expose and criticize as well as repeat.[17]

Any categorisation of literary works contributes to the analysis of ideology: the canonised or un-canonised, high or popular literary classifications. The distinction between elite and mass literature, for example, escapes from the ideological network located within. Such classifications and distinctions of feminist literary criticism help us focus on the ideological structures of literary production, particularly where such structures often are absent.

Images of women in male-dominated literary production are made problematic by feminist critiques. Cornillion's *Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives* (1972) is considered to be one of the foremost writings that scrutinises women's images in literary production. Through literature, Cornillion believes the historicity of women's oppression can be traced, and by understanding their subjection, women can raise new consciousness of how women were, are now and might become, thereby provoking new directions for women in reading and understanding fiction, which in turn may contribute to women's personal growth.[18] Feminist literary analysis examines the ways in which representations of women and their real lives are dissimilar. By reading against the grain of such representations, one can change perceptions of reality.[19] It should be noted, however, that the analysis should not

centre only on images themselves. Most importantly the exchange process and the relationship between representations and reality must be critically examined.

Reading images is not always the one-sided direction of the viewer looking at an image. Who is the viewer, what images does she look at, and how images are looked at complicate the problem. 'Looking' itself is a complicated and ambiguous act of reading, having multiple directions and creating multiple impacts:

> The way a woman looks might mean either a description of her appearance, or a description of her act of looking at others; the two kinds of looking might even be modified by each other. As such, images at which one looks can be simultaneously both a call towards or a warning against a particular way of looking (...) and an opportunity to look differently, to criticise or refuse that look in favour of another way of looking.[20]

In literary analysis fiction is no longer read without critically questioning images produced within its narrative. As fiction is constructed from the interweavings of cultural narratives, it is thus for feminists 'a cultural strategy for performing identity claims,' when these feminist 'become aware of the huge impact that literary works can have on public opinion.'[21] In fiction, identity formation is amongst the most observable materials constantly located within its narratives. Through narratives which, by and large, are drawn from the materials of everyday life, characters living in the narratives generate their identity formation translating individual meaning through their stories. For the readers, reading such stories – looking at other stories – creates a bond connecting the readers and the characters that continuously engages readers in the process of identity formation:

> Women have used the word 'personal' because emplotment has been their tool to create individual meaning through other stories – of the women of the past – in order to tie into a historical understanding the ongoing content of women's lives within narratives that offer a wider conception of 'agents' as moral subjects. In this sense, individuals do not simply have memories in the historical sense, but, by adopting ever changing attitudes toward them, continuously reconstructing them, they can develop new interpretations.(...) Identity is conceived differently in narratives not only because past experiences are rewoven through time, but also because each new and broader narrative gives new meaning to society's own larger narrative.[22]

One may respond differently to a given image depending on time and place. The way one looked earlier, one looks now, indeed, how one may look tomorrow and one's perception of looking at looking and re-looking denies an assumption that a given set of images subsists and carries a fixed meaning. Looking at images, or reading images of women in fiction is then not a simple act of reading but a rich and complicated way of looking, looking at what others look at, how women were defined, are defined and may be defined. Accordingly, feminist literary criticism develops a critical presentation of such looking by adding the dynamics of the whole process of reading/looking, aiming to invigorate multiple relationships between the female subjective and the social as they appear in fiction through literary representations.

Constructing/Reconstructing Women: Women Reading/Writing Women

It is Elaine Showalter who coins the notion of women's own literature, famously known as 'a literature of their own' or academically referred to as 'gynocritics' which she herself argues, 'begin at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture.'[23] Showalter's agenda is to create a space for the values of an own female culture and female biology without necessarily falling and being trapped into a dependency on men, male culture, value and approval.

Woman as reader and *woman as writer* are central to gynocritics. *Woman as reader* obliges her to critically read such male-produced texts, consciously examining the ways in which women are portrayed in these texts. In this way, the reader awakes to the significance of literary sexual codes[24], thus is able to read the texts from a feminist perspective. If *woman as reader* enables woman to be a critical reader of male-produced texts, *women as writer* requires woman to create her own meaning, acting as a producer and executor of her own politics. Proposing eloquently an argument to recognise woman as writer, Showalter posits:

> [w]omen as the producers of textual meaning, with the history, genres and structures of literature by women. Its subjects include the psychodynamics of female creativity; linguistics and the problem of female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career; literary history; and, of course, studies of particular writers and works.[25]

Furthermore, Showalter insists that feminist criticism must be fundamentally political and polemical in affiliating itself with, on the one hand, various theoretical criticisms and other modes of new feminist approaches and, on the other hand, aesthetical values making gynocritics 'more self-contained and experimental.'[26] The use of critical analyses and aesthetical values as methodological tool celebrates the rigor of feminist critique.

Both *woman as reader* and *as writer* open up a space for women to have their own culture within the literary tradition. However, in conjunction with the development of various approaches of feminist literary critiques, limiting female tradition to only one is problematic. When Showalter proposed to establish a female tradition she meant to include women writers of a particular background, as racially white and of educated, middle- or upper-class background. The limit to one female tradition embodies the notion of excluding other women who do not belong exclusively to the group. Such exclusion reiterates the notion of otherness, placing women who are not white, nor educated, nor from middle- or upper-class as 'others'. Feminism, for this reason, becomes hypocrisy, epitomising double standards of liberation and oppression at the same time. It imitates the very same domination it seeks to attack in the first place. To fight against such bias is to promote plurality and multiplicity of female own traditions within different literary genres, welcoming women across time, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, class, educational background, and other differing categories, as Showalter herself argues 'creative coexistence between traditions which inform and modify each other'.[27] A tradition relies heavily on what it includes and excludes, so a feminist tradition must not become fixed but allow for mixed values. Because women experience life differently, female traditions are heterogeneous, varied according to women's own subjective standings. Feminists themselves must be reminded of such heterogeneity. Ruth Robbins paraphrases George Eliot on the necessity of remembering women's plural tradition:

> It would be truer to say that women writers write after their many kinds; that their kinds of writing fully equal the kinds of writing produced by the many kinds of men; and that if we are alert to their kinds, we may also alert to differences that enrich the field of literature even as they also subvert its own traditional assumptions.[28]

Forging new female traditions provides possibilities for women as writers and readers of their own perspectives to continuously construct and reconstruct their own definitions, awakening to the notion that fe-

male traditions are not rigid categories, distinctly separable in time, space and culture.

Identity Politics

Identity construction cannot radically escape from the sexed body that one is born with. However, many feminists have claimed that a sexed body is not automatically endowed with sexual roles applying sexual practices. Simone de Beauvoir's famous adage says: 'one is not born as a woman, but one becomes a woman.' Championing de Beauvoir's premise, in explaining female sexual identity construction, Judith Butler argues:

> Construction is neither a single act nor a causal process initiated by a subject and culminating in a set of fixed effects. Construction not only takes place *in* time, but itself is a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms. Sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of this reiteration.[29]

By saying that identity construction is not always fixed Butler opens up a vast opportunity to see that gender and sexual difference is constantly evolving. The sexed identity is therefore no longer determined by presupposed norms and values to which a body belongs; more importantly, there is no single identity. Identity is always plural in its nature. Female identity formation conveys two oppositional characteristics of being produced and destabilised during the course of the on-going process of identity construction. Sexual identity then undergoes a similar process. In responding to the call of feminists to attack the determined identity of male traditional norms, women engage and awake themselves to the notion of self-identity, 'by conceiving their identities as flexible and self-reflexive.'[30] The influence of space and time also contribute significantly to identity process, different moments create different narratives of identity and different environments build different historical perspectives.

Gender has become one of the most applied notions of identity politics, especially when it is used to refer to the social and organisational relationships between the sexes. When gender is applied to a critical analysis, it becomes a pivotal tool for historical study examining the ways in which female and male relations are constructed in their socialisation. Gender is indeed both an empirical fact and a constitutive mechanism working both on individual and social levels; gender features consequently serve as one of many manifestations of a subliminal gender system operative throughout the cultural and social domain a sub-

ject belongs to. The duality of gender operations is revealed through literary and cultural criticisms. Through gendered literary criticism, the process by which the gendering system dominates both in fiction and actual life can be critically called into questions and challenged. Feminist literary analysis is a critical tool in demystifying the restrictive definition that women have long suffered by exposing the different dimensions based on female own cultures. Feminists can conceptualise and act to re-signify women's identity politics through the mediation of literature and thus have a huge impact on readers.

A Gaze of Her Own: Authority and Subject Position(s)

One powerful tool to centre the authority and subject position is the use of 'I' within the literary tradition. However, the authorial 'I' is not unproblematic.[31] The problematic 'I' lies in the sense that 'I' cannot radically stand outside any discourse of power that it is associated with. For the 'I' then, to be able to maintain its own integrity, it needs to play along the dynamic fields of critical negotiations, acknowledging its likeness and differences, its field of force and counter-force, play and (re) play. Within this respect, the 'I' then includes the 'I's of others who have left imprints in the process of subject positioning. Minh-ha captures the positionality of the 'I' and its enormous ability to create an endless story, a story that 'never really begins nor ends', and that '[t]here is no catching, no pushing, no directing, no breaking through, no need for linear progression which gives the comforting illusion that one knows where one goes.'[32] The authorial 'I' is the writer who herself has a beginning and an end but her story does not. Every woman is entitled to a gaze of her own, of situating her subject position according to her own vision and revision.

The female own gaze generates new alliances and resistances to defy patriarchal power, as the gaze 'destabilizes the fiction of [male] authorial intent and control.'[33] To evade an account that marginalises women as writers and readers, women must be included as contingent agents without relinquishing their dynamics and complexities. Female vision radically challenges the traditional notion of male gaze, of 'men look at women and women look at themselves being looked at', which simply objectifies women as the victims of male gaze. However, Parker and Meese suggest that to gain authorial gaze of their own, women do not necessarily need to eliminate others' subject positions.[34] Eliminating the positionality of another subject in erecting one's own, is but an oppression. To avoid such dilemma, subject position is negotiated through the practices of borrowing and of resisting the suppression

and fixation. This means to create a female culture and female visioning and re-visioning, which stand equally with male culture.

From Private to Public

A story multiplies itself through the process of weaving and reweaving by different story tellers (authors), so that stories no longer reside in the circle of personal domain; rather, they occupy a recognisable locus in the public domain. The thesis that 'the personal is political' is very well-suited. The story moves from private to public with no reservation. Narrative that paradoxically is personal in the first place becomes inherently impersonal. Given the very nature of language, the embedded themes living inside the narrative are disseminated and it is for the readers to create its signification. Seemingly silent and repressed, women as writers and readers come to speak loudly, using an alternative language of fluid and plural subjectivity.[35] In this respect, a woman builds two forms of identity of herself, and of solidarity with other female members through the process of self-identification with the characters appearing in the narrative. As Hannah Arendt states: 'narrative becomes the vehicle for the construction of collective and individual identities.'[36]

In the public domain literature plays its most important role as a privileged site where 'one becomes aware of problems not previously known or fully understood' by 'gathering information and making public a variety of experiences.' The public domain may then act as the centre of self-understanding for women to research historically why they are denied their public roles.[37] The varieties of experiences that women's stories offer can raise a new consciousness for women. Literature proves to be a powerful tool in creating a more woman-friendly environment both in the public and private domain where women have room of their own to pursue individual and collective growth. As James Bohman argues, the aesthetic realm, which in this case is represented by literature, is essential when one endeavours to promote a totally new understanding of the order of things.[38]

Feminist literary criticism aims to critically look at the ways women are defined and portrayed in literary writings by both female and male writers, and to question and scrutinise the representations and misrepresentations in a given literary tradition. Feminist literary critique aims for a mediating role between the structural system constructed in the public arena and the representation of that system in the narrative. In addition, feminist literary critique calls into question the received notion of female identity and helps raise new historical consciousness. By making personal stories into public ones, feminist criticism destabi-

lises the ways in which the signification process is produced and the location of meaning is sited. '[B]y contesting the spaces where "private/public" meanings located differences, feminists have shown that these spaces and their boundaries cannot be taken as given facts but must be seen as arenas for re-significations.'[39] The blurring of distinction between private and public spheres means that women have managed to make themselves the very subjects of collective action for constructing and reconstructing their identities.

1 Contemporary Issues of Women and Islam in Muslim Societies

When the PDIP (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan*, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) – a political party led by Megawati Soekarnoputri – won the general election in 1999, it produced a massive reaction in the political, social, and religious spheres. Most importantly, the PDIP's triumph in the general election also called attention to the issue of gender. Could Megawati Soekarnoputri become the first woman president in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country? Headlines of major newspapers in Indonesia such as *The Jakarta Post*, *Kompas*, *Republika*, *Jawa Pos* and others were flooded with the issue of whether a woman could or could not be the president of Indonesia. Opinion, especially that of Indonesian Muslims, was by and large divided into two opposing camps: those for or against her appointment. Such opinion occurred at most levels of society. At the political level, PPP (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, the United Development Party) even issued a *fatwa* (religious statement) that 'only a male Muslim be eligible for the presidency',[1] while other political parties such as the PKB (*Partai Kebangkitan Nasional*, National Awakening Party) stated that it would back Soekarnoputri in the presidential election.[2] At the social level, after weeks of controversy, NU (*Nahdlatul Ulama*), a leading Islamic organisation, through its chairman, Abdurrahman Wahid, stated that it supported a female presidency.[3] Not only political parties and social Islamic organisations took part in the debate, *ulama* (Islamic clerics) were also responsive toward the debate; some agreed with the female candidature and some rejected it. An article in *The Jakarta Post* stated:

> Many Muslim [*ulama*] and politicians of rival political parties have insisted that Islam does not allow a woman to be in a position of leadership in society. It must be stressed, though, that this is by no means the stance Muslims in Indonesia are taking. Muslims [*ulama*] coming from Java, Sumatra, Bali and the eastern Indonesian islands during the past weekend, for example, said that they would support whoever was democratically elected to become the nation's president.[4]

Within the debate, however, some *ulama* warned that religious and political interpretation should not be mingled and 'they called on social religious organizations, including MUI [the Indonesian Council of *Ulama*], not to become entangled in political power struggles through issuing statements, edicts or actions made on behalf of Islam and the authority of [*ulama*].'[5]

The debate around whether or not Megawati could be elected as the president even went beyond national boundaries. An article in *New York Times International* entitled 'Can she run Indonesia? It's about Islam, or is it?' also highlighted the divisiveness of the issue:

> 'A Woman President: No Way!' shouted a recent newspaper headline, stating the case succinctly (...).The rector of [Islamic] boarding school, Noer Muhammad Iskandar, took a different (perhaps less emotional view). 'Why not?' he said, 'Islamic laws allow a woman to be president. This business is a political interpretation of Islamic law, not a religious interpretation.' (...) The disagreement (...) goes all the way to the top of religious hierarchy. Three of Indonesia's five leading clerics argue that a woman cannot be president; two disagree.[6]

The argument outlined by Iskandar indicates that the realm of religious interpretation should not coincide with the realm of political interpretation, that religion resides in the private sphere while politics is public and that women's role should not be limited to the private domain only. Religious interpretation exclusively governs the relationship between human and God, and political interpretation human-to-human relations, and the first should not be manipulated in support of political interests.

It was not, ultimately, Megawati who became the fourth Indonesian president. After a long debate in the MPR (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*, People's Assembly), Abdurrahman Wahid, head of the nation's biggest Islamic organisation, NU (*Nahdlatul Ulama*), was elected as the president in 1999. In 2001, amid growing dissatisfaction with Wahid, Megawati was named his replacement. Megawati Soekarnoputri, a Muslim herself, then became the first woman president of Indonesia, and her vice president became Hamzah Haz of PPP, a party which earlier was opposed to the election of a female president.

The issue of gender in Muslim societies certainly has a long history of debate. The following discussion on the debate is exclusively drawn from literary sources written in English or Indonesian, and English or Indonesian translations of other languages. As Arabic functions as an important language in the Islamic discourses, many valuable sources are written in Arabic. However, sources originally written in Arabic, or

other languages, but with no English or Indonesian translation will necessarily be excluded due to the author's inability to read Arabic. The sources used are drawn from theoretical, historical, anthropological, sociological and religious studies on the notion of 'the woman's question' and the interpretation of political developments related to gender issues in Muslim communities. The differences within various Islamic schools of thought, such as Sunni, Shi'i and other schools, are of less concern since the emphasis is upon the gender issues raised within the tenets of Islam. That is, the Islamic background in which the issues take place and that construct the prevailing gender system in most Muslim communities.

The question of whether a Muslim woman can, or cannot be president has been addressed by several Islamic scholars. Fatima Mernissi, a Moroccan sociologist, is a Muslim scholar who has written several books on issues similar to those raised by the 1999 Indonesian election. Mernissi, in her *The Forgotten Queens of Islam,* argues that since the rise of Islam and after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, there have been Muslim women as heads of state.[7] In her book, Mernissi researches the history of these Muslim women rulers, and reinterprets the difference between the notion of imam, caliph, *sultan* (men) or *sultana* (women), and *malik* (king) or *malika* (queen). Imam and caliph have associations with the notion of a divine mission, and refer to those who are filling the place or succeeding the prophets.[8] *Sultan*, *sultana*, *malik* or *malika* are not 'tempered with religion, [and] are available to anybody (...) they do not imply or signify any divine mission.'[9] However, becoming a caliph itself is not granted based on gender, as she writes:

> No woman who has held power has borne the title of caliph or imam. For that reason are we to say that there have never been [female] heads of state in Islam? Is the title alone a sufficient criterion of exclusion? If one regards having the title of caliph as the criterion for governing, one is going to eliminate the majority of heads of state, because few bore that title. Caliph is an extremely precious title reserved to a tiny minority, because of its religious and messianic dimension. Even today, just as in the past, many Muslim heads of state would like to bear this title, but only the exceptional few have the right to it.[10]

Mernissi argues that even men who are given the title caliph are not themselves automatically born with the right. A caliph functions as the greater imam, whose tasks include 'the leading of prayers, legal consultation, adjudication, and municipal administration, while imam is the one who leads the prayers.'[11] She further continues that 'an imam is

not necessarily [a] caliph'[12] for a caliph leads people in terms of time, while an imam leads in terms of space. Thus, being an imam is merely one function of being a caliph. Because a woman's ability to deal with a 'lesser' imamate role is doubtful, some hastily come to the conclusion that her ability to deal with a 'greater' one is considered out of the question.[13] Such unsettling opinions of female imamate have long been in the centre of Muslims' debates. An early Muslim scholar, Ibn Rushd, states:

> Opinion is very divided on the ability of woman to be imam for a congregation of men [that is, to lead the prayers]; some even question her ability to lead the prayers of congregation of women. (...) Shafi'i authorizes [her] to lead the prayers of women; Malik forbids it; as for Abu Tawr and Tabari, they allow her to be [an] imam in both cases. Nevertheless, the consensus of the majority [of the religious authority] is to forbid woman to be imam for congregation of men.[14]

The caliphate, by contrast, has even greater implications. A caliph is 'both head of state and head of government and fills all the important cabinet posts.'[15] He is also the successor of the prophets, or as Ibn Khaldun writes, 'the guardian of divine law, namely *al-anbiya* [prophets] and those who fill their place, that is, the caliphs.'[16] A caliph embodies 'no personal narcissistic concern with power', thus according to Mernissi, the caliphate was 'a dream difficult to realize after the Prophet's death', because the caliphate was 'a mythical vision of a happy community ideally directed by a caliph who was made wise by divine law – a law that reduced him to a humble captive of God's project'.[17] The caliphate then lies at the core of Islamic philosophy and exemplifies the harmonious relationship between humans and Allah (*habluminnallah*) and the relationship among humans (*habluminnannas*). However, Mernissi shows that an historical shift in definition has occurred. Caliph is now a hereditary position, similar to that of king, which is passed down from one generation to another. The caliphate is now comparable to a dynasty. Since the period of the *Rashidun* or the Rightly-Guided Caliphs (632-661), after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the term caliph was transformed into 'a new form of Middle Eastern empire defined and legitimised in Islamic terms.'[18]

With regard to the reference made by Mernissi on the difference between an ideal caliph and head of state, several Indonesian Muslim scholars have made similar remarks. Related to the debate on whether a woman could be president, an NU local scholar, Ali Machsoen Musa, commented that 'there were great differences between a president and Islamic caliph. A caliph in Islam, for instance, bears all of the execu-

tive, legislative and judicative power, while a president holds only the executive power.'[19] Accordingly, the controversy surrounding the presidential candidacy of Megawati Sukarnoputri should not be merely an issue related to gender.

Indeed, women's exclusion from the political sphere may be due to the historical root of the term caliph. However, one needs to make a distinction between the myth and the reality, between the religious sphere and the political sphere, between the Islam *Risala* and political Islam.[20] Although a woman has yet to be a caliph, history shows that some of them managed to be sultanas and *malikas*.[21] Lately, women's involvement in politics, for example in becoming a prime minister or a president, challenges the assumed exclusion of women in the political sphere and highlights past instances of Muslim women in power. Muslim scholars, including Mernissi herself, have asked whether or not Benazir Bhutto was the first Muslim woman ruler. The argument suggests that the answer is no, not the first. Women's involvement in political Islam should be put in its socio-historical and cultural contexts. Mernissi quotes Ibn Khaldun to capture this context:

> Allah does not give orders directly to a person unless he knows the person is capable of carrying them out. (...) Most religious laws apply to women just as they apply to men. Nevertheless, the message is not directly addressed to them; one resorts to analogy in their case, because they have no power and are under the control of them.[22]

Mernissi uses the above quote as a reminder that along with the dissemination of the divine message, one should not forget the various ways people will interpret its meaning. Any issue should not be immediately considered a universal matter. It should be placed within a context, be it historical, social, societal, cultural or political, to avoid uniformity which may result in the domination of one category over another.

Reinterpretation of the Qur'an

Muslims perceive the Qur'an as the book from which interpretations of Islam derive. It is also the main reference point from which Muslims always live their 'Islamicity'[23] (a notion of Islam). Although it does provide principles and guidelines for Islamic spirituality, the Qur'an also serves as the main source of how Muslims should live their social life. Not only does it talk about faith and belief – a realm that grounds the relation between a Muslim and Allah (*habluminnallah*), it also talks about social spheres (*habluminnannas*) such as society, culture, social

order, philosophy, economics, politics, customary law, view of life, education, and so forth.

The need to reinterpret the Qur'an is perhaps the most important demand that many Muslim scholars, men or women, have ever articulated. The motive is not to question the *sura* (chapter) scripted in the holy book, but the interpretation that provides the exegesis of the *sura*.[24] Recognising changes in interpretation does not imply changes in the essence and form of the text. New readings (and this means plurality of views) provide a means by which Muslim communities can cope with the contemporary reality of dynamic and diverse Muslim societies. Stowasser states that some modernist Muslim scholars have taken the idea of reinterpretation to a bigger arena, which is the '*re-interpretation* of Islam, which includes new approaches to the Qur'anic text itself.'[25]

Social Reforms

There is a generalised world-view, more particularly in the West, that women in Muslim societies are powerless and marginalised. Esposito argues that:

> The study of women in Islam and Muslim societies is complex, reflecting the diverse and varied realities of Muslim women and Muslim societies throughout the ages. Alongside ideals embodied in the Qur'an and the traditions (*hadiths*) of the Prophet Muhammad, one must look at the actual condition of Muslim women in diverse time periods and socio-historical contexts. The status of women in Islam was profoundly affected not only by the fact that Islamic belief interacted with and was informed by diverse cultures, but also, and of equal importance, that the primary interpreters of Islamic law and tradition were men (religious scholars or *ulama*) from those cultures.[26]

Many Muslim women scholars, such as Riffat Hassan, Amina Wadud, Amira Sonbol, Fatima Mernissi, concur with Esposito's critique and challenge the broad applicability of terms such as powerless and marginalised.

Changes have occurred in the last few decades in the Muslim world. Women have appeared more in the public arena and some of them have occupied leading public roles. In Saudi Arabia, for example, where women were once excluded from access to education, equal educational opportunities for both sexes have arisen.[27] Women in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey, who have enjoyed rela-

tively more freedom in the public sphere than their sisters in Arab countries, push even more strongly for greater public space. The election of Megawati Soekarnoputri; the Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi; Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh and the late Prime Minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto also serve as examples of Muslim women taking leading roles in the public domain. Nonetheless, the acknowledgement of their extraordinary role in the Muslim world indeed does not automatically guarantee similar liberation for their Muslim sisters elsewhere. In some countries, Egypt, Sudan and Somalia for instance, FGM (female genital mutilation) is still widely practised and enforced in the name of Islam.[28] And, despite enjoying equal educational opportunities as men (see above), women in Saudi Arabia still do not have the right to drive a car.

Thus the lives of Muslim women vary from being powerless, segregated or deprived of basic human and religious rights, to enjoying equal or sometimes more freedom that their non-Muslim sisters in different societies. These women are situated in a complex web of economic, political, social and cultural structures of which religion is only one aspect. The feminist movement not only brought a tremendous change to Western women, – but to Muslim women as well. The Muslim women's movement has taken root in most parts of the Muslim world and the study of Muslim women in the Third World is no longer the exclusive domain of Western scholars, as many Muslim women scholars have begun speaking from within their own context. In Egypt, for instance, Malak Hifni Nassef, Mai Ziyada, Huda Sha'rawi, Doria Safik, Nawal El-Saadawi, and Alifa Riffat are the pioneers of such movements, defining and articulating the 'territory' and the 'discourses of female subjectivity' from a Muslim female perspective.[29]

The women's movement in Muslim societies not only challenges the allocation of acknowledged political power, it also demands the redefinition of power sharing. As more and more Muslim women open the gate of the mutable realms of power and religion, they affirm the equal gender relation that Allah (Arabic word for God) indeed promises in the book of revelation: that the nobility of a human being lies in his or her faith.[30] It is this particular verse that foregrounds the possibility of the Muslim women's movement. The equality granted by Allah becomes the basis of equality in gender relations. It is certainly this concept that Muslim women feminists have been articulating since the early twentieth century.[31] In her autobiography – *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of A Harem Girlhood* – Mernissi is constantly reminded by her grandmother that 'Allah made us equal.'[32] Her reminder is also a constant message to all women that they are created as men's equal. Thus, in her attempt to locate the core of gender inequality, Mernissi comes to the conclusion that 'if women's rights are a problem for some mod-

ern Muslim men, it is neither because of the [Qur'an] nor the Prophet, nor the Islamic tradition, but simply because those rights conflict with the interests of a male elite.'[33]

The discourse about women's movement in Muslim societies is indeed one challenging the male elite of the patriarchal societal system, changing the gender relations within which this discourse takes place. The discourse of equality articulated by Muslim feminists is profoundly rooted in the Qur'an itself. Based on this new approach to Qur'anic interpretations, gender relations in Islam need to be contested and redefined. Among the social reforms that the Muslim women's movement demands is an acknowledgement that the status of Muslim women is diverse, changing and distinctive.[34] Other reforms attack misconceptions about the so-called inalterable gender differences that regard women as different beings, resulting in the intensification of social barriers to female achievement. Women's access to public space must be opened wide in order that women's participation be accepted without prejudice. The improvement of the social status of women can be achieved by exercising a complete reorganisation of women's empowerment toward themselves: women's control over their own selves, defining themselves in their own context, be it public or domestic. These are some of the social reforms for which Muslim feminists have been persistently agitating.

The Politics of the Veil[35]

The veil is probably the most discussed issue relating to concerns of gender and Islam. The English translation of *hijab* (Arabic, literally meaning curtain or 'descended')[36] is inadequate to suggest the complexities and various meanings of *hijab*. Nonetheless, the term will be used in the following discussion without ignoring the fact that *hijab* has more cultural, social and religious roots than its English translation infers, and that there is no single view of Muslim women writers on such issue.

Definitions of the conception of the *hijab* vary, depending on the context and circumstances of the interpreters. Such variation is perhaps rooted in a still current controversy over whether the *hijab* is Islamic or not. Any attempt to claim that the veil is or is not Islamic should be based on a careful scrutiny of the verses in the Qur'an *sura* 24: Al Nur: 31, and *sura* 33: Al Ahzab: 59 in which the ideal dress for women is mentioned. [37] Such debates emerge, in particular, from the sentences: 'they should draw their *khimar* over their bosom' and 'they should cast their *jilbab* over their persons.' According to Fadwa El Guindi, at the time of the revelation *khimar* was a head cover, while *jilbab*

was a long, loose garment.[38] Whether *khimar* should be interpreted to mean to cover a woman's bosom, or as a garment simply taken and used to cover the bosom, is still a controversial linguistic interpretation. al-Sayyid Marsot posits:

> [T]he passages in the Qur'an that deal with clothing simply specify that women were to cover their cleavage, and that both men and women were to cover their pudenda and dress modestly. It is only in the *tafsir*, the interpretations written by male scholars, using Bukhari and Muslim's collections of the Prophet's sayings as proof for their allegations that we find a saying attributed to the Prophet in which he silently approved the garb of a woman who covered everything except for her face and hands. Yet much as Bukhari and Muslim laboured to sift through quotes handed down by various people which were allegedly said by the Prophet, it is necessary to remember that these men wrote their works two centuries after the Prophet's death, and that human beings are capable of error. Anything of importance is repeated in the Qur'an, so should the clothing of women have been of the least importance the Qur'an would have spelled it out in no uncertain terms. What we need to spell out, is that clothing is culture specific, although it does make a statement.[39]

Since the passages are read in a particular time and space they cannot radically escape from the socio-historical contexts of the time they are revealed. By examining the temporality of the *sura*, Mernissi, in *The Veil and the Male Elite,* argues that one reason the *hijab* was ordained for Medina was to protect Muslim women against men's harassments that forced them to practice *ta'arrud* – committing an act of *zina* (adultery).[40] Therefore, the earlier signification of *hijab* that it functioned as a sign of protection and differentiation becomes one among a myriad of considerations when examining the symbolism of the veil.

El Guindi's *Veil*[41] provides a profound and thorough examination of the veil, as it covers the trajectories of dress, body and culture and how its different significations appear. She argues:

> As far as is presently known, Islam did not invent or introduce the custom of veiling. Veiling for men and women had existed in the region prior to Islam – in Hellenic, Judaic, Byzantine, and Balkan cultures. Whether by adoption, reinvention or independent invention, veiling (...) has evolved into a distinct function and characteristic meaning from that in the northern Mediterranean regions.[42]

Moreover, El Guindi suggests that in examining the conception of veiling, as revealed in the passages of the Qur'an, aspects of culture and society must be emphasised beyond the sole factor of gender. Factors such as 'privacy, social and kinship relations, ranks, and the elements of building a new community [during the life of the Prophet]'[43] are additional emphases to the notions of body and sexuality in respect to culture.

Commonly for many in the West the veil is immediately correlated with 'seclusion' and 'politically charged with connotations of the inferior "other", implying and assuming a subordination and inferiority of Muslim women.'[44] Some American feminists still have problems in seeing the veil other than as oppression. Eleanor Smell, president of The Feminist Majority Foundation believes that donning a veil because of imposition or individual choice is submission, which for many Americans is equal to oppression as it represents shackles of cultural and individual behaviour.[45] Others simply look at it as a symbol of conservative Islam.[46] Accordingly, within a Western framework, the veil becomes the most prominent symbol of 'both the oppression of women (or, in the language of the day, Islam's degradation of women) and the backwardness of Islam.' From the late eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, the majority of Muslim countries were colonised by Western powers. The veil in colonial discourse was often used as 'the open target of colonial attack and the spearhead of the assault on Muslim societies,'[47] an assault which insists unveiling is necessary as it is 'the essential first step in the struggle for female liberation.'[48] Ironically, Qasim Amin's monumental book *The Liberation of Women* (*Tahrir-i al Mar'a*),[49] considered as the first Muslim writing against patriarchal domination of women, works within an agenda similar to that of the Western discourse.

Leila Ahmed in *Women and Gender in Islam* points out that Amin's arguments mimic the Western colonial narrative. Ahmed writes, 'the fundamental and contentious premise of Amin's work was its endorsement of the Western view of Islamic civilization, peoples, and customs as inferior, whereas the author's position on women was profoundly patriarchal and misogynist.'[50] Viewed from the Western colonial narrative, veiling is a symbol of oppression. Within the colonial discourse, since veiling is a symbol of oppression, unveiling then becomes heavily associated with the women's liberation movement against patriarchal domination, and unveiling becomes a means to improve women's status. However, because unveiling is proposed by the colonial West, the act of veiling is then utilised as a symbol of the anti-colonial and anti-Western. In resisting colonial domination, the return-to-the veil becomes a mark that signifies the anti-colonial resistance to Western domination. Ahmed comments that: '[the assumption] was incorrect in

its broad assumptions that Muslim women needed to abandon native ways and adopt those of the West to improve their status.'[51] Forcing veiled women to unveil is oppression in itself. Paradoxically, as the colonial discourse signifies unveiling, it is also the same colonial discourse that gives rise to the new meaning of the veil, as 'a symbol of resistance' or as part of 'discourses of resistance.'[52]

An example for such resistance is the use of Islamic veiling by Algerian women as a symbol of struggle for independence against French colonisation. Nevertheless, as a symbol of anti-colonialism, the veil only applies to women. The politics of the body appears to link closely to only women's bodies (from head to toe): covering or uncovering. The woman's body is no longer a matter of private life, but of the public and becomes a symbol of resistance, be it individual or communal. For men, to oppose Western colonialism does not necessarily mean altogether rejecting Western modes of dress. Muslim men opposing colonialism often adopt Western dress without being seen as an advocate of colonialism. Adopting such Western dress for these men may mean a move toward modernity, making them more equal to the West, however, because man's body is not so much a property of public life compared to woman's, what men wear is hardly discussed as a symbol of resistance. A similar case occurred in 1980s Indonesia when Soeharto's government banned women office workers wearing *jilbab*. Men were allowed to wear turbans and prayer caps. Within the context of resistance, the veil embodies a broad range of meaning: anti-colonial control to anti-colonial legacy (anti-Western), anti-corruption of Westernisation, woman's struggle for emancipation.

Giving a single meaning to veiling as merely an oppressive symbol for Muslim women is inappropriate, particularly where veiling is a matter of personal choice in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt, and Morocco.[53] Ahmed suggests:

> Because of the history of struggle around it, the veil is now pregnant with meanings. As an item of clothing, however, the veil itself and whether it is worn are about as relevant to substantive matters of women's rights as the social prescription of one or another item of clothing is to Western women's struggles over substantive issues.[54]

The veil goes beyond clothing, becoming an articulation of a substantive matter of women's rights. In the case of veiling by college Muslim female students in 'secular' universities where veiling is not forced, such as in Indonesia or Egypt, it may be seen as an articulation of their strong political and social commitments to their own community in which Islamic movements are housed. The women are not invisible in

their struggle for emancipation but, El Guindi writes, assert 'their Muslim identity, career-oriented, modern and veiled.'[55] The meaning of the veil is not static as it changes through its contexts and subtexts within which it is the women themselves denoting its meaning. Veiling is also grounded in different levels of class, social, political and economic positions. Haideh Moghissi, in *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism,* identifies various meanings of veiling from several Islamic feminists such as Abu-Odeh, El Guindi, and Hoodfar documenting what the veil may mean for the wearers who have adopted it by choice.[56] When veiling is voluntary Moghissi posits it is an item of clothing, indicating the exclusive property of the private sphere, even where that privacy extends to include public arenas. As a matter of personal choice, comments Hoodfar, the veil is clothing that 'may be worn to beautify the wearer', in the same way Western women choose to wear make-up.[57] For Abu-Odeh and El Guindi, veiling is identified as being related to woman's sexual body. Abu-Odeh suggests that veiling for young women serves as a 'remedy' for discomfort that women experience in their daily life, protecting them against sexual harassment. El Guindi sees veiling as a means for Muslim women to control their own bodies, to acquire 'sexual space and moral privacy.'[58] This control conversely results in the increase of their participation in the public sphere, at the same time signifying an act of anti-consumerism, symbolising women's return to modesty.[59] However, in Indonesian context, the notion of *jilbab* as an act of anti-consumerism might be questioned. There are veiled women who symbolise their veiling as an anti-consumerism act whilst there are those who 'mix and match' their Islamic styles with colourful designs and branded clothing products. Within the framework that veiling signals women's return to modesty, discipline and control, veiling grants women security and protects them against men's lust. Using this reason for veiling still imprisons women, for it implies that the women are victims that should protect themselves against men. The so-called lustful men, on the other hand, are not socially obliged to censure their own behaviour in any way. From this perspective, it is indeed the patriarchal domination that ironically allows veiling to become a means of liberating women. The veil therefore occupies an important position in articulating women's privacy and their choice of modesty as divinely ordained in the Qur'an.

In terms of the imposition of the veil, it is worth noting how veiling is perceived under an Islamic government mandating veiling for its Muslim women.[60] Those resisting veiling believe that just as an imposition of veiling to unveiled women is oppression, so is the imposition to unveil to veiled women. Those who accept veiling believe that since veiling is Islamic it is thus an obligation. Often called Islamists, these women (and men) believe that an Islamic government is a necessity

since it will return to 'the sources of Islam to regain a purified vision, long since lost in the mire of worldly governments.'[61] For Islamist women the veil becomes an important means of pursuing the path to liberation:

> Islamist women are particularly defensive of the veil. The actual imposition of the veil and the form it has taken is a contested domain. Nevertheless, many Muslim women have chosen the veil as the symbol of Islamisation and have accepted it as the public face of their revivalist position. For them the veil is liberating, and not an oppressive force. They maintain that the veil enables them to become the observers and not the observed; that it liberates them from the dictates of the fashion industry and the demands of the beauty myth. In the context of the patriarchal structures that shape women's lives, the veil is a means of bypassing sexual harassment and 'gaining respect'.[62]

The different significations of the veil from the revivalist's perspective are another layer of meaning which contributes to the already multiple symbols that the Islamic veil carries. What meaning the veil holds should be assessed depending on where women live, their context, and the way they seek to define themselves. In many countries where veiling is not required for women, the return-to-veiling movement gives an opportunity to women to define their own identity. In this way, it marks their claim to their own agency. In societies where veiling is a norm for women, unveiling also bears a similar signification of women's agency. As a construction of a woman's image, the veil stands as a crucial marker through which a woman is identified, recognised and perceived. Not only does veiling affirm a Muslim female identity, it also requires an observer to acknowledge the wearer's religious identity. Yet the potential for veiling to denote more than religious reference is powerful. Contemporary developments have shown that the veiling movement is becoming increasingly charged with political symbolism, where religious practices and non-religious symbols are difficult to separate.

Some in the West see veiling as an oppressive act and there is great divergence among Muslims too. On the one hand, that Western view reflects bias and hegemonic representation that in the end categorises Muslims as the 'other'. On the other hand, from an Islamic perspective, allowing only one representation is in itself oppression. Narratives of meaning, including hegemonic meanings such as veiling as a 'mechanism of seclusion', are accepted as long as such meanings are voiced by the wearers themselves. Veiling should therefore be understood as 'a function of diverse social, political, cultural and economic

activism'[63] and of the development of an achieved status rather than an ascribed status for the wearer. Where veiling is voluntarily, its meaning marks the shift of the boundaries between self and other, increasing female agency. As veiling used to be the symbol of man's control over woman, the justification and re-appropriation of the contemporary veil movement, and its discursive practices 'emphasize female self control and independence in ways, by and large, challenging the traditional and the orthodox determined position.'[64]

The veil is not reducible to a single meaning, but must be placed within the context in which it appears. Thus women articulate their own meanings, their self-representation of the veil, in order to contribute to the multiplicity of meanings. In the Indonesian context, for example, when the veil (or *jilbab* in the Indonesian language) is donned by choice, women have no difficulty in adjusting to different contexts. Many farmers, such as the members of *Persis*[65] (Persatuan Islam, Islamic unity) in West Java, have no trouble working in the field wearing *jilbab*. Nor do the students of secondary or tertiary education while doing their physical exercises. As a student remarked, 'everything depends on one's *niat* (one's determined will). When a girl has her *niat* to wear *jilbab*, she finds no difficulty in doing anything with her *jilbab* donned'.[66] Conversely, women believe that when donning the veil is a matter of force and without *niat*, it will certainly restrict her actions.

Veils come in varying styles and modes enabling women to meet religious obligation with fashion. In Indonesia, women donning a variety of *jilbab* can be spotted everywhere from the street corners of big cities to villages in rural areas. The 'fashionable *jilbab*' known as *baju Muslim* (Muslim fashion) can be bought almost everywhere, from department stores, often having a special section for *baju Muslim*, to traditional markets. Some women, young and old, choose to tailor their *jilbab* ranging from the simplest to the most extravagant colourful designs. Many match their headscarves with branded clothing such as Polo, Guess, or Levi's. Those who view veiling as an anti-consumerism act will look for the simplest and least-colourful design – usually dark colours and long, loose garments – whilst others will reason that since only the face, hands and feet are to be exposed, it is enough to simply match their headscarves with blouses and pants from a range of colours and prints, or with tight jeans and long-sleeved lycra tops.

Many women work and are attempting in their own way to negotiate religious observance, tradition, modernity, globalisation, consumerism and fashion and to mark an identity for themselves all at the same time. Clearly there is a difference between veiling as an act of choice or veiling as a mandatory obligation. To wear or not to wear the veil is a woman's choice for such choice is her attempt to show her charge of her own body and mark her adherence to Islam however she may

choose. Both men and women, the Qur'an says, are asked to lower their gaze and keep their modesty. Men, too, do not hold to a monolithic view of veiling. In Indonesia, for example, some men see it as an obligation while others leave it for women to decide. In a similar manner women have differing views on the growing of beards for men or the wearing of Islamic clothing known as *baju koko*.[67] The heart of the discussion on donning the veil is the question of choice. Women wearing the veil carry the right to be respected for their choice in the manner by which they mark their religiosity and so do women without veil. Women themselves have their right to decide whether to veil, unveil, remain veiling or remain unveiling.

Legal Reforms

There is a widespread belief that because *shari'a* is a divine law it is thus static and must be rigidly followed. An-Na'im and other Islamic legal reformists, however, argue that although *shari'a* is based on the Qur'an and the authentic *Sunna* (traditions) of the Prophet, it is not a divine law. Their contention rests on the fact that the other two sources of *shari'a*: *qiyas* and *ijma* are undeniably human, and therefore cannot be divine. Further, An-Na'im argues that the application of the concept, the methodology, principles and techniques of the *shari'a* are also human because they are developed by the jurists themselves. An-Na'im concludes '*shari'a* is the product of human reasoning upon a foundation of divine inspiration.'[68]

Since *shari'a* is a human product, its interpretations are necessarily self-evidently human. The systematic codification of *shari'a* by four *madhab* (Islamic schools), which belong to the Sunnis – Maliki, Hanbali, Hanafi and Shafi'I – had not been conducted until 150 to 200 years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. As *shari'a* not only governs spiritual relationships (humans in relation to God – *ibadat*), it also deals with human-to-human relationships (*muamalat*). *Shari'a* regulating principles of *muamalat* are, on the other hand, exclusively based on social occasions. Humans become the sole agent interpreting and applying *shari'a* regarding the realms of socialisation. Consequently, *shari'a* relies considerably on man's intellectual capability in interpreting social problems using *shari'a* as the primary reference. It is within this framework, then, that *shari'a* is located. Although 'a product of the divine will and knowledge', *shari'a* 'regulates and is regulated in its application by human will and understanding, which have only a limited reality.'[69] *Shari'a* is grounded in the notion of this limited reality, a crucial point where legal reform is concerned. *Shari'a* is capable of changing, for it is not static within a specific time and place. As a human

phenomenon, *shari'a* is contestable and dynamic, serving the necessity of relating contexts, making it time-bound, conditional, and historical and open for new interpretations.

Asma Larif-Beatrix argues that *shari'a* is 'the product of that human and historical process of elaboration – the great impressive and intellectual tradition of Islamic legal culture, as it was developed by many of the best minds within Islamic civilization over fourteen centuries. (...) The *sunna* was not only codified more than two centuries after the Prophet's death but (...) its interpretation was at the time also framed within certain, again historically, conditioned mental or intellectual limits.'[70] Larif-Beatrix's argument stresses that even the *Sunna* cannot radically escape from historical construction. John Bowen's writes that *shari'a* is best understood as:

> The interpretive struggle (*ijtihad*), to approximate the path or way, (...) determined by God, a path not completely knowable by humans. Despite popular Western ideas to the contrary, *shari'a* cannot be reduced to a single set of books. Humans can only engage in the fallible efforts to interpret and apply concrete cases the diverse, sometimes conflicting, often ambiguous signs given by God. Jurists and other scholars draw on multiple sources of law, including specific directives found in the Qur'an and *hadith* (the reports of the Prophet's Muhammad's statements and actions), general principles of equity and justice derived from the scripture, past traditions of interpretations, and the social norms found in the society.[71]

Not only does the historicity of the *shari'a* need to be taken into consideration but the importance of political culture also needs to be emphasised, for it functions as a legally important determination constructing the *shari'a* at the conjunction of 'the empirical and the normative, the local and the divine, inform[ing] each other in the interpretive struggle.'[72] Situating the *shari'a* in the locus of conflicting operations of socio-political, historical and cultural circumstances helps to explain the discourses from which the *shari'a* comes into being.

Since the death of the Prophet Muhammad the *shari'a* has been largely defined by elite male jurists and legal scholars. Therefore, issues of gender in the *shari'a* have not been interpreted from a female perspective, resulting in misconceptions on the roles of woman and their status in Islamic legal discourse. Female jurists, such as Amira Sonbol, have started to challenge the notion of the static *shari'a* by examining its historicity with fresh eyes, new research methods and new language skills.[73] Legal reform that jurists like Sonbol propose opens the way to giving more room for women to view legal discourse from within their

own paradigm. Sonbol's findings are quite challenging, for she argues that in fact modernity, not just tradition, plays a large part in the continued subjugation of women in modern legal discourse. She contends that:

> There is no question that modernization has changed the situation of Muslim women dramatically and that the status of women has become one of greater openness and less seclusion. However, (...) the historical transformations of the last two centuries, although allowing women a greater public role, actually brought about a general deterioration in social maneuverability, especially for women. This deterioration was closely tied to the evolution of new state structures that fit the needs of new hegemonic elite combines, usually formed from alliances between foreign business interests and westernising national leaders. In the process of nation-state building, the hands of the state extended toward family and personal laws, standardizing, codifying, reforming, and modernizing them. The process had a profound impact on the status of women, creating for them, so to speak, a double jeopardy.[74]

Therefore, legal reforms aimed at liberating women from subjugation must not only overcome past traditions but also the current hegemonic political power of contemporary nation-states. In fact, the hegemonic ruling elite determines woman's position more than the traditional ideology. Even within modern conditions, then, legal regulations can still act as a barrier to equality. Thus, seeing that *shari'a* is contextual and historical,[75] Sonbol proposes to create *shari'a* that gives more room for women to view legal discourse from within their own paradigm.

The prohibition on women's participation in public life is said to be the root of gender inequality in Islamic societies. Stowasser, in 'Women and Citizenship in the Qur'an',[76] writes that verses dealing with the *hijab* imposed on the wives of the Prophets (*sura* 33: 53) and regarding the wanton display of women's beauty (*sura* 33:33), become the legal reference for interpretation limiting women's space to the domestic domain. She notes that the emphasis in the two *sura* is indeed on the principle of modesty, as a substantial part of the Qur'an ordains modesty for both men and women, but, as a legal reference, the two verses are used to define not only women's modesty, but are extended to include their segregation and seclusion from public life. Women's modesty as stated in the Qur'an is then interpreted as both physical and political invisibility.[77]

Interpretations of the *shari'a* vary between different countries and in some there is a blurring of the distinction between the public and pri-

vate spheres, but it should be emphasised that class, culture and social structure engender different ideas about social norms and values. For example, where poor economic conditions necessitate women taking part in providing family income women have less segregation. In Indonesia the majority of women are not segregated, yet class elements should not be discounted. On the one hand, there are women from higher social classes who are currently restricted from entering public life. On the other hand, it is common to see lower class Muslim women active in the public domain, such as in the markets, or in the fields. Nonetheless, for the majority of Indonesian Muslim women the domestic sphere is still seen as their domain and this acts to maintain the traditional order of gender inequality. Interpretation of the distinction between public and private spheres for women is influenced by the different socio-political situations in which they are situated. In this sense existing reinterpretations provide clashing paradigms that are shaped by the political and economic needs of the ruling elite. Accordingly, such reinterpretation is problematic. In a society such as that of Saudi Arabia where women are largely secluded, the Saudi bring in Indonesian Muslim women as workers. Although in Saudi Arabia Indonesian women mostly work in domestic service, compared to their female Saudi counterparts they have greater access to the public domain. Class, economic and political aspects, and local and national culture are important considerations in any examination of the distinction between public and private in Muslim societies.

Interpretation of the *shari'a* from a female perspective is necessary in order to promote gender equality and enhance the role of women in society. There is an urgent need for a greater understanding on the part of all Muslims that the rights of women need to be extended and legally protected. Through this women can raise their social awareness and improve their personal self-perception and self-determination for the overall national development of their countries. However, whether or not male scholars will accept interpretations of the *shari'a* from a female perspective is a challenge female jurists still face. An Indonesian Muslim feminist, Siti Musdah Mulia exemplifies such a challenge by proposing a counter legal draft of the compilation of articles under Islamic Law (KHI, *Kompilasi Hukum Islam*) in 2004. Until today, her proposal remains controversial.

Educational Reforms[78]

Qasim Amin's 1899 text *The Liberation of Women*[79] (*Tahrir al-Mar'a*) was among the first tracts to make a demand for educational reform for women. For Amin, providing equal education means giving women

the ability to exert an immense influence on the nation's progress, based on the premise that women's status in society is 'a reflection of the nation's moral standards.'[80] Thus, using Amin's logic, liberating women by giving them equal access to education means the elevation of the nation's status. Although Amin's demand for educational reforms signalled an important shift in the educational discourse on gender, it was not a complete educational liberation for women.[81] Amin's view on educational reforms was highly influenced by the late nineteenth century colonial discourses on schooling girls. Lila Abu-Lughod[82] criticises Amin as an advocate of colonialism who uses 'a particular kind of feminism to undermine his own culture along lines desired by the colonial powers.'[83] Abu-Lughod questions the colonial context in which Amin's writing is situated and concludes that Amin's suggestions for women's rights, education and work is a proposition to create a modern bourgeois family.[84]

Educational reform for Muslim women is not without challenge. For example, the majority of Afghan Muslim women living in areas ruled by the Taliban from 1996 to 2001 were banned from attending formal schooling: girls were expelled from schools and young women from colleges, and the Taliban ordered that 'all schooling was forbidden to girls over the age of eight.'[85] Yet, Afghani women were not passive and many of them reacted strongly against the school banning and the denial of already existing rights to education. They sent their girls to secret schools where local women volunteered their teaching services. Since the end of Taliban rule in 2001, Afghani women are moving from invisibility to visibility, from shadows to substance, seeking full participation in restructuring and transforming Afghanistan to a functioning, viable state.

Some assume that liberating women through education means modernising them through Western education. Others maintain that education for women should be limited to the basic knowledge of running the household, the model as proposed by Amin. The general underlying purpose of educating women in Muslim societies is currently based on the notion that the nation's reproduction depends on the reorganisation of how, and under what circumstances, children will be born and raised. As producers of new kinds of individuals in the emerging social order, women therefore need to be trained and trusted to fulfil the task. Education for women, then, still largely means making them aware of the requirements of their so-called domestic roles, while their social roles seem to be neglected. As education has always been perceived as 'a major factor in shaping a society and in enriching the cultural heritage'[86], educational reforms therefore means that educational opportunities for Muslim women are not limited to just household education, such as how to be a good wife and a good mother. Educational opportu-

nities are to be extended to encourage women to be active participants in social, economic, and political arenas within their community. Hence, such reforms can then accommodate the needs of each community, applying models using 'indigenous ideas, concepts, myths, and idioms to explain and support the rights [of women]'[87], as documented by women's own needs and definitions. Reforms in the educational system will enable women to contest the male-oriented representations of the domestic, facilitating greater autonomy and independence from male authority in all aspects of life. Not only does women's literacy enhance women's emancipation and mobility by giving them more access to non-domestic roles, it also serves as a political and cultural negotiation since both women's and men's role and status are reflective of underlying social, political and cultural achievements of any given society. Although historically women from lower social and economic classes have been outside their homes, as they work in the fields or in the markets, being in the public arena does not necessarily mean that they enjoy greater educational access than women from other classes of society. Many of these women cannot enjoy access to education because of lack of economic support. Thus, struggles for equal access in terms of education, economic autonomy, status, role, socio-political, cultural participation, are to be undertaken, not only for women but also for men.

As a strategy to increase women's power in all spheres of life, a reformed educational system departing from the traditional and orthodox model of educating women just to be good wives and mothers can develop a new critical mass among the female community. Mahnaz Afkhami, posits that:

> [m]any Third World Women, including those living in Muslim countries (...) have taken the lead in studying, developing, and implementing strategies to increase women's power in all spheres of life. Realizing the importance of religion and culture in communicating human rights concepts and mobilizing women to political action, they are investigating the possibilities, among others, of 1) interpreting the [Qur'an] and the *hadith* (the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad); 2) educating the political elite and providing them with new interpretations of sacred texts that can be used as a basis for legislation and the implementation of change; and 3) mobilizing grassroots support and establishing dialogue between people at the grassroots level and national and international decision makers.[88]

Only through educational reforms can the goal 'to modify traditional mores and laws to accommodate the requirements of women's free-

dom, equality and human rights'[89] be achieved. Afkhami's proposition indeed explicates the need for a community to be dynamic in such a way that it is no longer imprisoned in the nostalgic past. A dynamic civil society is fundamental in encouraging the establishment of equality and freedom for both women and men. Educational reforms need not only cover the new definition of Islam under women's own paradigm, but must also encompass the evolution of a civil society where women's participation, equal to men's, is sanctioned in public spheres as well as private.

Social, legal and educational reforms are among those that Muslim women need in order to achieve the notion of equality as divinely ordained in the Qur'an. Social reform covers gender relations, demands for equal access to the economic and political spheres and autonomy. Legal reform includes women's demand for the reinterpretation of *shari'a* (Islamic law). These demands highlight some of the issues Muslim women have raised since women's emancipation has articulated an agenda that calls for equality. Since Muslim women scholars realise that *shari'a* (as interpreted by men) supports men's definition of Muslim women's status and roles, they demand a female interpretation of the *shari'a* in order to achieve an accommodation of women's greater political and social involvement. Muslim women also demand educational reform that grants them access to more than just education on domesticity, but also access to the religious texts, providing them with the opportunity to scrutinise those texts from the point of view of women's own experiences and perspectives. New readings of the Qur'an therefore need to be argued for strenuously for it is the book from which Muslims foreground the order of Islamic society.

Theorising Islamic Feminism

In theorising Islamic feminism, this book compares Islamic feminist discourse with Western secular feminist discourse. Such a comparison seems to be quite inaccurate. The appropriate comparison is with Western religious feminist discourse in which many common issues, such as the issue of whether women can be priests and rabbis or hold leadership positions in church and synagogue, may be found. However, there seems to be a gap in the publication of Islamic feminism about such inter-religious comparisons. What this book lacks, then, is a reference to the parallel discourse of Christian and Jewish feminists or feminists of other religions (not only the Western religious feminist discourse).

A homogenising definition of Muslim women suggesting that they are backward, illiterate, segregated and victimised by patriarchal subju-

gation reflects a stereotyping of these women, and places them in a reality where questions of race, class, economic condition, and culture are often ignored. Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues that in scrutinising gender issues in any given society, universality of framework should be avoided, for universalism places any scholarship as 'ahistorical power structure'.[90] The practice of veiling is a prime example of such misplaced universalism. As noted in the preceding chapter veiling is commonly regarded as suppression of women's rights; unveiling is thus believed to be women's assertion of their rights. As bold assertions neither view takes note of the particular circumstances in which veiling/unveiling takes place. The conception of *purdah* (segregation between men and women), for example, reflects a similar complexity as its significance varies across social, historical and cultural practices. The perception that all Muslim women are being oppressed by sexual segregation is, Mohanty argues, 'analytically reducti[ve]'. She further continues that any analysis concerning women and gender, in any given context, should be situated within more than the category of gender as a basis. Such analyses need to be grounded in the relations between 'gender, race, class, and sexuality at a particular historical moment.'[91] Gender issues in an Islamic context are, therefore, 'not just a purview of women (but of women *and* men).'[92] Mohanty suggests that the dynamic, fluid, fundamentally historical and everyday lives of women should be given substantial consideration in order to avoid the collapse of these women into a few frozen 'indicators'. Not only does the locality of cultural practice have some bearing on gender issues in Islam, spacio-temporal contexts and the broad canvas of Muslim society also play an important role in shaping Islamic conceptions of women as individual and collective social agents.

In seeking to define Islamic feminism the rich vocabulary of both Islam and feminism, which results in multi-dimensional definitions and images, contradictions and debates, needs to be taken into account. The reason lies in the juxtaposition of the word Islam and feminism. Islam works in the trajectory of faith, while feminism is of secular origin. Islam is a religion whose community of believers (*umma*) are required to be totally submissive to the will of God, while feminism derives from a Western secular perspective. Many assert that Islam and feminism are not compatible, while others maintain that Islam and feminism are congruent. The debates concerning the compatibility of Islam and feminism make the term problematic. The academic response to the notion of Islamic feminism is also sharply divided. Some scholars believe that because the patriarchy is a matter of dominant consciousness, shaped by state, religion, class, media, language, culture and other socio-political forces Islamic feminism is not an oxymoron: other Muslim woman scholars reject the compatibility of Islam and

feminism. Shahrzad Mojab[93] argues they are not compatible, since it is based on a 'fundamental fallacy' 'treat[ing] Islam as the only authentic (...) road to gender equality and justice (...) [by] interrogating its central texts in search for an answer to the questions of women's rights.'[94] Since Islamic texts are largely written from the patriarchal perspective, 'Islamic feminism and its various forms, ranging from fundamentalists to reformists, do not have the potential to be a serious challenge to patriarchy',[95] simply making these terms an 'oxymoron'[96] or 'a contradiction in terms.'[97]

Contemporary scholars who are in favour of the term 'Islamic feminism', such as Leila Ahmed, Riffat Hassan and Fatima Mernisi, attempt to reconcile feminism with Islam. Anouar Majid, in 'The Politics of Islamic Feminism', argues that Islam and feminism are not necessarily two opposing terms, contesting each other. Majid writes:

> A careful articulation of an Islamically progressive agenda – democratic, anti-patriarchal, and anti-imperialist – might provide impetus for a new revolutionary paradigm. This new Islamic consciousness, [should be] firmly rooted in usable traditions of Islam without abandoning the parameters of faith. (...) This conception of Islam alone is capable of legitimising feminism in the Islamic world by posing a formidable challenge for clerical, orthodox Islam, which has stubbornly refused to extend more freedoms to women and minorities.[98]

In working within an Islamic framework feminism is being challenged 'with the monumental task of contesting orthodoxies [both] simultaneously and dialectically.'[99] Majid proposes a distinction between Islam as a pure religious belief, and political Islam.[100] For Majid the adjective 'Islamic' is problematic because it is heavily abused and corrupted, as well as being theoretically confusing. Majid criticises those who limit the term 'Islamic' to a pure religious belief and insists that the adjective 'Islamic' refers to more than just religion. In her critique he cites Marshal G.S. Hodgson on the use of the term 'Islamicate'. For Hodgson the term refers to 'the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims.'[101] What 'Islamicate' is for Hodgson, then, is really much closer to Majid's 'Islamic', exposing their apparent opposition as simply a lexical difference. Any attempt to theorise Islamic feminism must, therefore, move beyond Islam as a pure religion, but also beyond feminism as mere Western secular ideology and conceive Islamic feminism as dynamic with its roots in the historiography of Muslim societies.

As a part of a larger social movement (in this case the women's movement), Islamic feminism nevertheless emerges within Islamic culture and society. Ignoring the socio-cultural progress that takes place within a given society means to treat such a society as frozen in time and place. Limiting Islamic feminism within a single perspective means 'fail[ing] to locate Islamic society within [its] proper historical and geographical context, and it ignores the particularities of time and place central to the making of culture.'[102] Acknowledging the dynamics and diversity of Islamic feminism is crucial in examining the discourses of feminism and human rights in the Islamic world and in exploring the indigenous models of emancipation for the masses in general and women in particular.

Margot Badran posits that feminism must be contextualised within the framework of time, place, class and groupings by ethnicity and creed.[103] Bouder agrees, arguing 'feminists do not all think the same way or even about the same kinds of problems.'[104] Echoing Badran's view of the diversity of feminism, Mai Yamani, in *Feminism and Islam,* writes that Islamic feminism adds another layer to global feminism by 'introducing a feminism which is "Islamic" in its form and content.'[105] Although Yamani does not clarify her idea of 'Islamic', certainly her notion of Islamic feminism is similar to that proposed by Majid, Badran and Mogadham: it is feminism seeking women's improvement which must have reference to Islamic values and norms. Yamani argues:

> Such feminism is unique in conjuring up delicate and challenging issues for political and religious authorities as well as for scholars in a world of a billion Muslims. Within that new overarching background which deals with Islamic laws and traditions, the category of 'Islamic feminism' may stand its ground by the sheer diversity it includes: contributors to the debate have been considered 'new feminist traditionalists', 'pragmatists', 'secular feminists', 'neo-Islamists', and so forth. For all these thinkers, however, there is a common concern with the empowerment of their gender within a rethought Islam.[106]

The categories and differing characteristics, as Yamani suggests, are diverse. Nevertheless, the common ground that each aspect of Islamic feminism shares is the agenda seeking women's empowerment. Within global feminism, adding 'Islamic' to feminism means receiving religion as a reference into an already multi-dimensional typology of feminism.

In every part of the world, women react toward their social and political conditions differently. Some may retreat to the assurances of religious conservatism; others may choose to struggle for the social order

that best serves their need to create a better society. Various movements, including Islamic feminist movements, respond to certain conditions and contradictions between the ideal and the reality. Since such a response is circumscribed by the cultural politics of a society, feminist movements in the Muslim world, alongside other social forces, are struggles for civil and democratic rights to achieve equality for all.

Common Ground, Different Contexts

As Margot Badran writes, '[t]here are multiple identities, multiple political projects, multiple ways of constructing culture and evoking historical memories.'[107] The same goes for the historical realities of Islamic feminism. The different meanings of Islamic feminism to different women across ages, regions, classes and cultures result in the multiple dimensions and contexts of the term. It is crucial not to define Islamic feminism, or locate the Muslim women's movement, within a single framework. There is no single definition to accommodate such a broad term. What is more essential is to identify how women position and view themselves, construct their agendas, and reconstruct their own experiences. Such positioning recognises the commonality that women from various movements share.

Despite the varieties and complexities attributed to Islamic feminism, such feminism does not radically divert from the path of any other feminism. The stories of feminism are stories of intersections between feminisms and nationalisms, between national feminisms of the ex-colonised Eastern countries and the Western-dominated international feminisms, between global feminisms and indigenous feminisms. However these diverse feminisms share a commonality that is 'a woman's view that seeks to restore women to their place in history.'[108] With regard to the complexities of feminism what is 'of central relevance to understanding the condition of women' is, as Kandiyoti states:

> The ways in which women are represented in political discourse, the degree of formal emancipation they are able to achieve, the modalities of their participation in economic life and the nature of social movements through which they are able to articulate their gender interests.[109]

Similar to other women's movements across the world, the Muslim women's movement in the Muslim world or in the non-Muslim world, from Indonesia to India, from Egypt to Saudi Arabia is grounded upon the central idea that even those opposing the compatibility of feminism and Islam agree on:

> Being a 'feminist' begins with the refusal to subordinate one's life to the male-centred dictates of religious and non-religious institutions. Feminism's core idea is that women and men are biologically different, but this difference should not be translated into an unequal valuation of women's experience and men's experience; biology should not lead to differences in legal status, the privileging of one over the other.[110]

Whether working within 'secular' Western notions of feminism or feminist theology, women are using a variety of strategies based on their existing situations to overcome discrimination. Muslim women who call themselves feminists, or those who refuse to be labelled feminist, agree that Islamic feminism 'strive[s] to create equality, not for the woman as individual but for the woman as part of the family, a social institution still seen as central to the organisation and maintenance of any society'.[111] From her visits to most parts of the Muslim world, Elizabeth Fernea identifies the common ground alongside the different contexts of Islamic feminism and what it may mean to women. Fernea elucidates how diverse Islamic feminism is:

> The woman's question is a central question everywhere, and women are active, (...) grouping and utilizing a variety of methods to achieve goals of gender parity, dignity, public power, goals that have been challenged by the ruling patriarchal traditions. Many are rejecting the Western feminist label, while at the same time employing some of the ideas, some of the same strategies as Western feminists. For some, religion is given in the feminist/womanist movement, the path to equality; of these women, a minority do indeed call themselves Islamic feminists. Some Muslim women believe that women should cover their heads and dress modestly, and they find justification for this in the Qur'an; the focus of their efforts is not the veil but the evaluation of sacred texts, with an eye to reforming the law, and 'creating the just society propounded by Islam.'[112]

Muslim feminists are not only working within the paradigm of their religion and their own particularity, as feminists they are participating in and creating a wider movement where secularists and non-Muslims are included. Fernea posits:

> Poverty, domestic violence, political participation, female circumcision, literacy, social class, discussion of the veil, appropriation of the written word, legal equality – these are all aspects of this wider movement, in which Islamic feminists are also involved.

> The strategies these women are using to address their problems, though often different from (...) the West, merit (...) respect, and offer (...) a new source of inspiration. They are creating something new and powerful out of bits and pieces of Western ideas and (...) [their] traditions. In their struggle for legal and economic equality they stress the viability of the family group, a sense of responsibility to the wider group, the importance of religious values, (...) combining elements of both East and West to develop several feminist ideologies of their own.[113]

Lila Abu-Lughod, in 'Feminist Longings and Postcolonial Conditions', asserts that 'feminism always occurs in particular contexts, historical and social.'[114] Knowledge of women's conditions, whether women themselves shape, or are shaped by the complex fields of forces within their community, are important to any women's movement. One needs to know what one has and must confront before undertaking a necessary struggle. Equating feminism with revolution, Fernea uses the analogy of one of her female activist friends who said: 'a revolution is like cooking; before you begin, you have to look into the cupboard to see what ingredients you have at hand to work with.'[115] The locality and context in which women adopt feminism must be put into consideration, placing women at the centre of any social, political or cultural movement. However, working within Islam from the perspective of feminist theology institutes a more profound and diverse way of gaining insight into the woman's question. Islamic feminist theology can serve as a base for the Islamic women's movement and an understanding of where the 'derailment' of women derives. The politics of Islamic feminism must become indigenous to the region, pervading all domains of the *umma*, be it economic, cultural, social or ideological to become the context in which the struggle for women's emancipation is located. The very broad parameters of Islamic feminism, therefore, will remain to be contested and redefined, accommodating the needs of both women and men to create a just society which is the promulgation of Islam. Islamic feminisms could then serve as *ijtihad*[116] to achieve the very foundation of the first Muslim community in Medina, that is justice and equality and with such foundation, Muslim feminists can attempt to endow women with room to accommodate their own responses, and create their own discourses, enabling them to conceptualise their own selves.

2 Gender Issues and Islam in Contemporary Indonesia

As various Islamic discourses on gender emerge within the global setting, so are such discourses emerging within an Indonesian context. Since the focus of this book is on the narratives of selected contemporary Indonesian Muslim women writers and how they engage with the notion of women's representation, identity, status and role, it is important to look at ideas about gender, and the influence such ideas might have on the writer's narratives. Literary reproduction is not isolated from the cultural, political and socio-religious contexts from which it comes. It can capture the dynamics of the society within which it is constantly shaped and, in turn, shapes the world-view of the authors, the readers and the community. Engaging in the sociological dimensions of literary production is crucial because literature and society are two sides of the same coin, continuously influencing each other. This chapter serves the function of outlining the sociological dimensions in which the writer's narratives are placed.

In reviewing the historiography of gender issues and Islam, what constitutes Islamic writing is still controversial. What does 'Islamic' mean when the adjective is attached to writings? Does it need to reflect Islam as a category of religious belief or Islam as the spirit materialised in the writings? Chamamah Soeratno argues that 'Islamic' here must mean more than placing Islam as a religion in a limited sense.[1] Soeratno 'broadens' the adjective 'Islamic'. Parallel to Hogdson's 'Islamicate' and Majid's 'Islamic' discussed in the previous chapter, Soeratno proposes to extend 'Islamic' to more than a religious conception. Basing her argument on Maududi's view that Islam functions as a moral guidance in all facets of Muslim life, Soeratno concludes that Islamic values do not belong to a certain group or community, rather, Islamic values such as equality, justice and humanitarian norms of liberty and democracy are universals for all individuals taking active participation in all aspects of life.[2] Soeratno reminds us that the terms 'Islamic texts' or 'Islamic writings' should not be limited to those that encompass only Islamic elements in a rather limited sense, such as Islamic jurisprudence, or Sufism and its rituals. Instead, 'Islamic' should become an active and dynamic element where its values reflect its expression in human life. Islamic values are values obliged by divine imperative

for every Muslim to attain in his/her way called 'jihad fi sabil Allah' (striving in the cause of Allah) through mandating justice and equality for all. When accepting Islamic values as universal, a writer who strives for equality and justice in her/his writing can be considered as an 'Islamic writer' without necessarily being a Muslim.

Another premise for categorising writings as 'Islamic' is proposed by Asma Afsarudin. Basing her arguments on the notion of what is Islamic she uses Hodgson's term 'Islamicate'.[3] Afsarudin argues that 'Muslim', 'Islamic' and 'Islamicate' are nonetheless interchangeable terms describing:

> [S]ocieties and nation-states that maintain and/or have consciously adopted at least the public symbols of adherence or considerable segments to traditional Islamic beliefs and practices. Such societies or considerable segments within such societies may regard Islam as a civilizational-ideological construct on par with or complementary to the constructs of Western secular culture and feel themselves free to borrow haphazardly from both systems. They do not, however, found their greater part of their legal system on an Islamic basis nor attribute their formation to the realization of religious objectives (with very few notable exceptions).[4]

Islam, in this sense, becomes more of an 'idiom' shared by the majority of the population and exemplified in collective celebrations, festivals and individual or communal rituals, and as such are the assumed characteristic of Islamic societies today.[5] Although Afsarudin does apply a slightly different distinction to the terms 'Muslim', 'Islamic' and 'Islamicate', her differentiation is only as a matter of time periods. For Afsarudin 'Muslim/Islamic' signifies periods before Western influence or colonial invasion, while 'Islamicate' covers epochs after such influence. However, she concludes that contemporary Muslim societies are 'Islamicate' in the sense that Islam is used in 'emotive, broadly cultural, and experiential terms, rather than in legal and theological terms.'[6]

Accordingly, a clear-cut categorisation of what is 'Islamic' and 'non-Islamic' is not an easy one. Such blurring of distinction derives from an understanding that 'Islamic' is not a category radically isolated from the spacio-temporality from which it is used to depict something, be it society, normative association, or even writing. One may conclude that Islamic writing is then any writing pertaining to any association with any Islamic/ate values. Such writing does not need to cover merely a sole definition of Islam by a certain group. Such writing opens a vast category, a vast association, serving as an open corpus interpretable and approachable from any direction. What is Islamic does not have to

have a direct reference to Islam. A writing with no Islamic religious reference may well be justified in calling itself Islamic when it conveys the ethical message of Islam of equality and justice. The first and foremost requirement of Islam is to believe in Allah, who is 'Rabb al-'alamin', creator and sustainer of all peoples and universes, who sends revelations for the guidance of humanity to and through the Prophet Muhammad, preserved in the Qur'an and the sound of *hadith*. The term 'Islamic narratives' should not be limited to only those claiming to be Islamic. Muslim writers advocating the advancement of women, gender equality, democracy and modernity work within Islamic narratives, even though such narratives might be viewed as marginal by traditional Islamic scholars.

More than a decade ago Lies Marcoes commented on the vital need to have 'more wide-ranging and in-depth studies of Indonesian Muslim women.' At that time, compared to the abundant resources on the lives of Muslim women from other parts of the world, such as Africa, Afghanistan, Iran and the Middle East[7], there were very few studies concerning Indonesian Muslim women. There was a particular lack of resources in the Indonesian language. The changes in Indonesian political life over the last few years are a significant cause for the abundance of writings on gender and Islam that now appear. Indonesian Muslim female and male scholars are now articulating their ideas about gender relations both through public speaking and their literary production. Nevertheless, despite the variety of views the writings represent two distinct opposing views.

One view sees biological distinction between men and women as the inherent basis for the different roles for men and women in their societies. Biology is used to relegate women to the private sphere and they are said to be more emotional and less intelligent than men. Conversely, because men are born with stronger physical ability than women they are considered less emotional and more intelligent than women and thus belong to the public sphere. Differences in terms of biology are used to ascribe psychological differences and this is used to demand differences in laws, rights and obligations.[8] This is known as the complementary function: women are created to be the complement of men, and vice versa. In this view because men and women are naturally different they are therefore *kodrati*[9] (Indonesian, meaning the unalterable nature one is born with, or predetermined). Crossing the public and private spheres becomes impossible with *kodrati*. Men cannot and should not enter the private or domestic sphere, nor should women enter the public. This is considered gender equality ordained by Islam, and it seems this view justifies gender equality by reference to gender inequality. It is a view commonly held by traditional authorities

that use religion to justify women's subordination, and provoke hatred against those proffering alternative views on women's rights.

Johan Meuleman, in his research on books about Muslim women circulating in Indonesia, classifies the above view as 'apologetic discourse' because it attempts to define how Islam can provide eternal justice and equality for women's emancipation, their social and spiritual roles, right and obligations, in comparison with other religions.[10] In this view, since Islam is capable of endowing its believers with the principle of equality, feminism and women's emancipation are seen as evil products of the West that all Muslims should fight against. Islam, thus, is not in need of gender equality as the *shari'a* has placed Muslim men and women in equal position.[11] Meuleman concludes that such writings are used to sustain a traditional view and are mostly written within Middle Eastern settings. He observes that such books are principally irrelevant to the circumstances of Muslim women in Indonesia.[12] What is important to note here is that Islam cannot be separated from the locality of the life of Muslims. The subject position of those interpreting and of those practising the religion – their culture, gender, race, ethnicity and class differences, need to be taken into account.

The opposing view criticises the belief that biology determines the complementary function of men and women as gender bias. These writings commonly represent the voices of Muslim feminists and other male and female scholars who challenge the traditional authorities by offering different interpretations and reinterpretations accommodating the challenges in contemporary society. Zainah Anwar of *Sisters in Islam* in Malaysia, writes:

> In responding to the international discourse on women's rights, such Muslims, including women educated by traditional teachers, say that because men and women are not the same, there cannot be equality. Instead, they say that in Islam men and women complement each other and therefore what Islam recognizes is equity not equality. What this means is that because men and women are different, they have a separate and distinct role to play.[13]

Scholars like Anwar argue that natural differences cannot and should not become the locus for discrimination between men and women. Whilst men and women are endowed with different physiological functions their roles in society – separation into public and private spheres – are a matter of culture, and not nature. Interpretations by progressive Muslim scholars in Indonesia parallel those in other Muslim societies which argue that gender equality in Islam means similar opportunities given to both sexes in order to achieve justice and equality. Such femin-

ist interpretations of the Qur'an assert the belief that *ijtihad* has and will always be part of Islamic scholarship.[14] If the 'gates of *ijtihad*' were closed in the late eleventh or early twelfth century certainly they are now truly reopened with the introduction of new exegesis of the Qur'an.[15] The co-existence in Indonesia of oppositional discourses on gender equality is worth noting, as it marks the diversity of notions of equality as understood by Indonesian Muslims.

Although writings on gender discourses in Indonesian Islam are a rather recent phenomenon – first appearing around the 1980s; writings on 'woman issues' date back more than a hundred years. *Kitab* (Arabic, meaning book) *'Uqûd al-Lujjayn*[16] by Imam Nawawi (Muhammad Ibn Umar al-Banteny al-Jawy, 1813-1898) is regarded as a 'classic' source. As writings are, to a certain degree, reflections of the socio-historical circumstances of their societies, one may assume that written documentations of 'woman issues' inscribed long before gender equality discourses come into being are heavily gender biased. This is true of the *Kitab 'Uqûd al-Lujjayn*. This *kitab* is classified as *kitab kuning* (Indonesian, meaning yellow book). *Kitab kuning* are classical books recording exegeses and explications of Islamic teachings by *ulama* of premodern schools of thoughts.[17] Although 'secular' Muslims appear not to use this *kitab,* for students of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and their surrounding communities, the book is very popular. While it is not the main text book it is read and serves as a reference for many Muslims in their family life, particularly in terms of husband-wife relations. The book prescribes what a Muslim wife and husband should and should not do in their marital relations. According to Nawawi's interpretation, for example, the *hadith* literature says a wife who refuses to have sexual intercourse with her husband, will be condemned by the archangel till sunrise.[18] A recent critical rereading of Nawawi's work has been conducted by the *Forum Kajian Kitab Kuning* (FK3, *Kitab Kuning* Studies Forum) – a forum for *kitab kuning* studies, which is chaired by the former Indonesian First Lady, Mrs. Sinta Nuriyah Abdurrahman Wahid. FK3 has recently published their study. On the question of the condemnation by the archangel, for example, FK3 says the *hadith* needs to be read critically not textually. The teaching must be intended for both wife and husband, and not solely for the wife. Indeed, the meaning of *al-la'nah* (God's condemnation of a sinner) given by Nawawi is misleading, as it should be understood in a social context as the loss of good deeds, compassion and peace in domestic life.[19] FK3 believes that this *kitab* comprises exegeses of normative Islam that may be in conflict with the spirit of Islam in matters of justice and equality. From the rereading of the *hadith* literature that the *kitab* draws upon FK3 locates misinterpretations that reflect gender bias, which in turn leads to a promulgation of gender inequality.[20]

What FK3 has done is to show the way for similar studies to be undertaken on other textbooks in the *kitab kuning* series, particularly those touching on gender and power relations. Such new readings are behind the movement to disseminate new ideas of gender in the *pesantren* world. Husein Muhammad reports that several projects to raise awareness of gender issues within Islamic paradigm are currently being undertaken. It is vital not to ignore gender issues, as more than half of *pesantren* students are female. NGOs such as *Yayasan Kesejahteraan Fatayat* (Foundation of *Fatayat* Welfare) in Yogyakarta, P3M (*Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat*, Coalition of *Pesantren* and Society Development), the Rahima Foundation, and, of course, Yayasan Puan Amal Hayati (Puan Amal Hayati Foundation) are amongst notable organisations raising concerns about gender issues with *pesantren* women. These institutions often hold a number of forums, trainings and workshops for the *kyais* (Indonesian, Muslim clerics and, usually, the head of *pesantren*) and *nyais* (the wife of a kyai who can be the head of *pesantren* for girls), particularly the young ones, in order to provide them with information concerning *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and women.[21] Many *nyais* and female graduates of the *pesantren* occupy public roles and are active in women's organisations. However, Muhammad reminds us that not all *pesantrens* raise such issues in their programmes, many still teach and implement the discriminative and heavily gender biased *kitab kuning* without critically assessing and situating those *kitabs* within women's rapidly changing situations.

Similar researches and studies are also being conducted at the academic level as Islamic scholars, such as Nasarudin Umar, Zaitunah Subhan, Masdar F. Mas'udi and Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, are rereading and reinterpreting the classical texts, including *kitab kuning* and Quranic exegeses. Umar's published dissertation *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender: Perspective Al Qur'an* (Gender Equality Arguments: The Quranic Perspectives, 2001), Subhan's *Tafsir Kebencian: Studi Bias Gender dalam Tafsir Al Qur'an* (Interpretations of Abhorrence: Gender Biases in the Interpretations of the Qur'an, 1999), and Mas'udi's *Islam dan Hak Hak Reproduksi Perempuan: Dialog Figh Pemberdayaan* (Islam and the Women's Reproduction Rights: Dialogue on Empowerment Jurisprudence, 1997) and Dzuhayatin's articles on the problems of gender bias in Islamic teachings can be deemed as central texts articulating gender equality by proposing new interpretations of Islamic texts such as the Qur'an itself, the *hadith* literature and Qur'anic exegeses. Also, most State Institutes of Islamic Studies (IAIN, *Institut Agama Islam Negeri*) now have a PSW (*Pusat Studi Wanita*, Centre of Women's Studies) as important research and teaching programmes. The most notable examples are the PSW in IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, and the PSW in

IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta.[22] Some of the *pesantren putri* (Islamic boarding school for girls), such as in Seblak Jombang, under the supervision of Lili Zakiyah Munir, the chair of Cepdes (Centre of *Pesantren* and Democracy Studies), run courses on Islamic feminism and gender issues.[23]

In contemporary Indonesia women's roles are deeply defined not only by state power implemented in the Marriage Law, but by Islam as well, which plays a crucial part in the process of women's domestication. One must add that *adat* is still influential, especially in Javanese culture. As the Javanese comprise more than forty percent of the Indonesian population Javanese culture is largely dominant in Indonesian cultural lives. The role of women is reflected in three prominent Javanese *adat* beliefs. The first lies in the saying '*konco wingking*' (literally meaning: companion whose place is in the back part of the house); the second in '*suargo nunut neraka katut*' (meaning: a wife will go wherever her husband goes, to hell or heaven, making her a mere follower of the husband's deed); and the third says women's roles are '*manak, masak, macak*' (to breed, to cook, and to adorn herself for her husband) which correlate closely to women's places in '*kasur, dapur,* sumur' (bed, kitchen, doing household jobs). This Javanese notion of women's roles and place indeed corresponds with *Priyayi Ibuism* that Suryakusuma so strongly attacks. Indonesian Muslim women must challenge these fundamental beliefs accommodative of women's oppression in their endeavour for women's empowerment. The Javanese conception of being *pasrah* (accepting any situation) as the best way to accommodate change seemingly cannot hold any longer.

Nevertheless, despite the institutionalisation of patriarchal state power, male interpretations of Islam and paternalism within *adat,* there is action within the Islamic community (from both men and women) for change, most notably since the 1990s. Muslim women had raised their voices before, but in the mid-1990s – through activism – they managed to make their voices impossible to ignore. Since then both individuals and organisations are forging new paths for environments that are woman friendly and accommodative to women's own religious interpretations. As Istiadah writes:

> The 1990s is an important period for Muslim women in Indonesia because during recent years new Muslim forums and organizations were founded, new Islamic women's organizations were founded, new Islamic books which are more liberating to women were launched and the existing Islamic women's organizations rearranged their activities to focus more on women's rights issues. (...) For the anniversary of Muslimat NU in 1994, this forum conducted a conference on women and published

> the papers as a book called *Islam and the Advancement of Women*. This means that Muslimat NU is no longer merely concerned with women and family matters but is also improving its activities concerning women's self actualisation and women's rights. In 1994 Pustaka Bandung Publishers simultaneously published Indonesian translations of three famous Islamic books: *Women in Islam*, by Fatima Mernissi, *Women in the Qur'an*, by Aminah Wadud Muhsin, and *Muslim Woman and Social Pathology*, by Mazhar Ul-Haq Khan. (...) Indonesian people, especially women's activists had an opportunity to have dialogue with Ashgar Ali Engineer, the Indian author of the Rights of Women in Islam and Riffat Hassan, a Pakistani-American Muslim feminist who is constructing a new interpretation of the Qur'an from a woman's perspective. Young women Muslim intellectuals with a progressive outlook started to spread discourses to attack Islam and the New Order patriarchal system. People such as Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, Wardah Hafidz, Nurul Agustina, Cici Farha Assegaf and Lies Marcoes have played an important role in this campaign.[24]

The 1990s has witnessed the shift from State *Ibuism* to a feminist discourse.[25] This parallels with a discourse increasingly conservative in Islamist revivalist circles, making the works Nusyahbani Katjasungkana, Wardah Hafidz and others mentioned as counter discourse on female seclusion and polygamy expressed in more Middle Eastern literature imported into Indonesia.

In 1994 *Ulumul Qur'an* (*UQ*), a prestigious Islamic journal, published a special edition on the 'woman's question' in the Islamic environment, looking at psychological, sociological, cultural and religious issues.[26] *UQ* documented a number of articles by Indonesian Muslim female and male scholars, ranging its discussion from the notion of feminism, Islamic feminism, the evolution of *shari'a,* to anti-feminism. The scholars agree upon the universal ethical message of the Qur'an, which is the spirit of humanism, social justice and equality, emphasising that the existing interpretation of gender relation is male biased.[27] Many of the writers have also agreed that although women in Indonesia have enjoyed more freedom than their sisters in the Arabic world – exemplified by women's dominant role in batik trading in Solo, for instance – their social, cultural and economic participation in public affairs is still largely ignored.[28] However, not all articles are supportive of this criticism of Islamic societies as mostly male biased: some articles are in opposition to women's movements. For example, in Ratna Megawangi's article, 'Feminisme: Menindas Peran Ibu Rumahtangga' (Feminism Oppresses Housewife's Role), Megawangi is very critical of fem-

inism because (in her opinion) it generates nothing but another oppression: of housewives. Megawangi concludes that since women cannot liberate themselves from biological formation, gender equality is not necessary, as it creates more problems for women evidenced by the Cinderella Complex, in which women require men's protection.[29] Megawangi is critical of radical feminism's call for equality between women and men at all cost, yet she neglects the very keystone of feminism, which is freedom in instigating women's own voices.

Myra Diarsi, the chair of Yayasan Kalyanamitra, an organisation that has undertaken much research on women's problems, and also instigated gender training, opposes Megawangi's ideas. Diarsi argues that Megawangi fails to grasp the true meaning of feminism as an idea and methodology that becomes very useful in looking at inequality.[30] Diarsi asserts that indeed feminism was not anti woman's role as housewife but considered it a productive profession that needed to be valued. What feminism challenged was not the role itself, but the hierarchy, ordination and exploitation that such a role created that eventually benefited one particular gender. Feminism was against housewifisation, as housewifisation limited women to only domestic roles without giving them significant involvement in public roles. It also aimed to safeguard women from the so-called 'double burden' (*peran ganda*), which saw women working both outside and inside the domestic sphere, while husbands were only obliged to work outside.[31]

Clearly, Megawangi's argument is based on the premise that femininity and masculinity are natural constructions, while social, economic, cultural, political and geographical conditions are correspondingly ignored. In suggesting that man is a natural born leader and a woman his dependent, she places women in an inferior position. She is right in asserting that the family is a significant institution in social structures and that its role must be reinforced in order to build more egalitarian relations, yet her argument on the way to achieve such relations is extremely conservative: she demands that household jobs be regarded with respect and privileges this role for women. Her proposal of housewifisation seems to be contrary to her own public role as a university lecturer since academic institutions are commonly perceived as promoting women's roles outside the domestic arena.

Obviously Megawangi's arguments touch merely upon the utopian level and totally overlook other conditions that are of major importance in shaping family life in Indonesia. In a family where economic conditions are such that there is no need of a wife's income Megawangi's ideas might suit, but they allow little room for choice. She also fails to see that her ideal family is rarely achieved because more than fifty percent of Indonesian families need the wife to work outside the home for family sustainability. Her lack of concerns over other contributing fac-

tors proves that her arguments are not so dissimilar with those of orthodox Muslims, who believe that biological differences alone can relegate gender equality. A Muslim herself, Megawangi supports her arguments with references from the Qur'an and *hadith* to privilege 'positive patriarchy', emphasising that gender equality can be attained in *batiniyah* level (inner level), and not in *lahiriah* level (physical level). She concludes that in both man is levelled higher than woman for man is associated with the positive, while woman is associated with the negative, therefore to be good means to be man, and such a position is a holy ordination that must not be challenged in order to arrive at harmonious gender relations. Megawangi's argument is also premised heavily on man as a perfect husband and father who is not capable of domestic violence against his wife and children. Her argument radically neglects the reality in many Indonesian households where domestic violence, including marital rape, is not uncommon. Her proposal to give a different perspective in viewing gender relations is not 'new' but a repetition of the textual interpretations by Muslim scholars discussed earlier. For Indonesian feminists and those espousing equal gender relations, Megawangi's publication is another celebration of patriarchal oppression of women.

The Islamic feminist movement in the 1990s was not the only movement in the life of Indonesian Islam under the New Order. The end of the regime's policy of depoliticising Islam towards the late 1980s was marked by the emergence of Islamic revival movements, such as the *Dakwah* (the call for God) movement, which began on university campuses. Within this movement there exists a wide spectrum of views between groups such as *Hizbut Tahrir*, *Darul Arqam*, and the *Tarbiyah* (education) movement[32], which is centred on university campuses.[33] Most members and supporters are largely from university life – many with strong technical and sciences orientations – who were educated in secular universities in Indonesia and overseas as part of a national campaign to modernise the nation. *Tarbiyah* sees Islam as 'the only solution' to overcome Indonesia's multiple problems: through a return to Islamic moral principles; the Islamic way of life; and the establishment of an Islamic government (Islamic Caliphate). Members of this movement, through their student organisation KAMMI (*Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia*, Indonesian Muslim students front), played a considerable part in the collapse of Soeharto's regime in 1998 and in favour of President Habibie. Moreover, KAMMI did not want a total shakeup of the regime contrary to other students' movements.

Many see the *Tarbiyah* movement as mirroring the *Ikhwanul Muslimin*[34] (Muslim Brotherhood) of Egypt set up by Hassan Al-Banna in 1928. Many are also afraid that this movement might steer Islam to radical revisionism and revival, which is potentially dangerous for the

moderate Islam in Indonesia. However, in contrast to other Islamic revivalist organisations, the *Tarbiyah* movement, like the Brotherhood, is reformist, and relies heavily on modern interpretations of Islam concerned with democracy, civil society, human rights and equality of women, although these values are understood differently from common Western notions.[35] The *jilbab* (veil) movement in secular university campuses, for example, is taken as a sign of religious freedom. Though the *Tarbiyah* believes segregation is necessary in public places, women are perceived as men's equal, thus deserving rights of equal opportunities in public roles, especially in political participation. The group has many women activists, and although in their meetings males and females are separated with different meeting entrances, women are not to sit behind men, but they sit equal to men, in a segregated space. In the 2004 election for members of parliament, PKS (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, Prosperous Justice Party) whose core founders and members are of the *Tarbiyah* group, allocated thirty-eight percent of positions to female candidates.[36] It was the highest percentage of female candidates for election of parliament members amongst any political party, passing the demanded quota of thirty percent for female representatives. However, if *Tarbiyah* discourses have strong influence on university campuses, such discourses are not without challenge. Muslim feminists' discourses coming from the same campuses and NGOs are their counter-discourses.

However, the *Tarbiyah* movement's espousal of women's issues in an Islamic setting complicates even more the dissemination of such issues to the Indonesian public. The *Tarbiyah* conceives that male and female are segregated in nature (biological construction) yet in that segregation lies irreplaceable equality in any sphere and any value. Segregation aims for self-discipline, including concealing the slightest demonstration of one's sexuality in public. Women and men are segregated in public but can mix in the private sphere if bound in legal marriage. This conception suggests that Islamic values, regarding human sexuality, are a closed and silenced system. Indeed, although members of the *Tarbiyah* movement claim to reject feminism, in particular they reject liberation of women's (and men's) sexuality, as it is believed to be of Western origin. In fact, they subscribe to concepts of sexual equality while maintaining sexual segregation. The rise of the *Dakwah* movement and its various groups has raised concern in Indonesian society that such groups may pose a threat to civil Islam. However, to see all groups in the *Dakwah* movement as militant, radical or even fundamentalist is wrong; the complexity of Islamic movements requires careful examination as within these movements groups are fragmented in terms of their interpretations of Islam and its application.

The Need for New Qur'anic Interpretations

Nurcholish Majid, Ahmad Wahid, Masdar Mas'udi, Ali Yafie, Quraish Shihab, Wahid Zaini and KH Hussein Muhammad are amongst the progressive Indonesian Muslim scholars who believe that conventional interpretations of the Qur'an that privilege one sex over another are mere literal textual interpretations, lacking the real intention of the ethical message that the Qur'an brings of equality of all humans. Progressive scholars such as these disseminate a notion of gender equality that rests firmly upon their more contextual Qur'anic interpretations; they do not stand alone in their endorsement of contextual interpretations. International scholars, males and females alike, such as Ashgar Ali Engineer, Amina Wadud, Fatima Mernisi, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and others, whose books are easily accessible for Indonesian audiences, agree with their readings. Mas'udi identifies two kinds of verses in the Qur'an; fundamental and instrumental. Fundamental verses, verses that are fixed (*qoth'i*, literally means explicit, thus 'clear-cut', 'decisive') in the Qur'an are concerned with the principles of egalitarianism and equality, while instrumental (*dzanni*, literally means hypothetical, thus 'uncertain') verses as interpreted contextually explicate more on technical things, as exemplified by women's dress code and inheritance. Mas'udi states that the determination whether a verse is fixed or instrumental depends on the content or level of meaning, and not linguistic formulation.[37] The most popular quoted verse widely used and misused in relation to gender relation is *Sura* al-Nisaa verse 34, which in part says, '*arrijalalu qawwaamuuna 'alan nisaa'*, meaning men are *qawwaamuuna* of women. As was noted in Chapter 2 debate still surrounds the interpretation of the meaning of *qawwaamuuna* (men as leaders, protectors, maintainers, guardians, in charge of and superior to, etc). Indonesian modernists who attempt to give more contextual meanings to the word insist that its meaning must be contextualised in time and space. The seventh century Arab society where the Qur'anic verses were revealed was one of constant tribal warfare, contemporary Indonesia on the other hand, is highly urbanised, and nomadic and tribal segmentations are not a feature of Indonesian communities. Lily Zakiyah Munir believes that although textual readings (which privilege patriarchal domination) are still widely practiced today, the 'true' Qur'anic spirit is one of gender and sexual equality.[38] Mere textual readings of the Qur'an and *hadith*, leaving off the revelation's social-historical roots, makes a reading partial and static, which in the end loses the deeper side of God's message. New Qur'anic interpretations are more liberating for women.[39] Drawing on the work of such seminal scholars as Fazlur Rahman, Amina Wadud and Ashgar Ali Engineer, Indonesian scholars are deconstructing the old/classical inter-

pretations that are heavily male biased and argue that verse 34 *Sura* al-Nisaa shows no superiority of one sex over the other. Istiadah writes:

> Abdurrahman Wahid (...) argues that the word *gowwamun* in this verse has an anthropological meaning. By this he indicates that this verse is not the norm, rather this verse explains the situation at the time of this verse was revealed. Although Masdar F. Mas'udi and Quraish Shihab argue that women's role as educator of the children is very important, they encourage women to participate in public life. Masdar argues that if a wife works for income, the income belongs to her and need not be shared (...) Quraish Shihab also emphasizes that the wife has a right to maintain her own property without her husband's agreement (...) [while] [c]ommenting on a wife's obligation to obey her husband, Ali Yafie argues that the husband's consent is not absolute (...) a wife who refuses to have sex with her husband is not automatically sinful. If there is a 'true' reason it is not opposed to the religious norm.[40]

Istiadah concludes that the implication of such new readings by these leading Muslim clerical scholars is immense. Not only do these influential scholars acknowledge the intense patriarchal system when they reinterpret the Holy Scriptures, at the same time they also raise women's awareness of the gender biases of older interpretations. The 1990s became a departure point for more liberating interpretations of the Holy Scriptures that in the end will create more room for Indonesian women's own perspectives.

Contemporary Indonesia is flooded with new Qur'anic readings and interpretations. Two prominent scholars, Zaitunah Subhan and Nasaruddin Umar, are Indonesian contributors to the new feminist theology paradigm discussed in Chapter 2. Both Subhan and Umar are lecturers at UINs (*Universitas Islam Negeri*, Islamic State University), whose writings are highly valuable.

Zaitunah Subhan's *Tafsir Kebencian: Studi Bias Gender Dalam Tafsir Qur'an* (Interpretations of Abhorrence Gender Biases Studies in the Interpretations of Qur'an)[41] is regarded as one of the pioneering works on women and Islam written by an Indonesian Muslim woman. Subhan's research is based on her readings of three major Qur'anic *tafsir* (interpretations) circulating in Indonesia – the works of Mahmud Yunus, Hamka, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. She intertextually compares and examines the three *tafsirs*: her work is a feminist reading of existing Qur'anic *tafsirs* by Indonesian *ulama*.[42] Subhan concludes, in accord with other Muslim feminist scholars such as Riffat Hassan, Fatima Mernisi, Ali Asghar Engineer and the like, that careful readings

of the Qur'an show no ordained sexual discrimination. That a woman is created from Adam's rib; that a woman lacks intellectual reasoning; that a woman inherits half of a man's portion; that a woman's only place is within domestic walls; that a man is the leader in his household; and that a woman's testimony is worth half of a man's, are merely products of interpretations that benefit man's domination over women. Other than biological differences, any sexual discrimination is socially constructed and therefore must be challenged and reworked in order to promote social justice and equality.

Nasaruddin Umar's work is focused on his own interpretations of the Qur'an. In his extensive writings and discussions in numerous media, Umar is known for his premise that the Qur'an's message is one of gender equality. His publications include, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender: Perspective Al-Qur'an* (Arguments of Gender Equality: The Qur'an Perspective)[43] and *Qur'an Untuk Perempuan* (Qur'an for Women).[44] The latter is seminal for its title suggests that Umar's interpretations of the Qur'an aim to protect the rights of women.[45] Founding his *tafsir* on numerous classic Islamic texts and archives that serve as major references for Muslims, Umar proposes new readings using more critical methodologies – propagated by Western scholars such as Charles Sanders Pierce, F.D. Schleiermacher, W. Dilthey and others – covering semantic, semiotic and hermeneutic approaches, and Islamic reading methods such as the theory of *asbab nuzul* (reasons of revelations) in *Ulum al-Qur'an* (Qur'anic sciences) of classic and modern Muslim scholars. Amongst his findings is that the non-standardisation of punctuation of Qur'anic *rasm* (Qur'anic writing) may contribute to different meanings. Different writing (*rasm*), and a different reading act (*qira'ah*), are influential in comprehending and drawing a legal system from Quranic sources,[46] hence reading the Qur'an critically is of vital importance. For Umar, gender *tafsir* is interpretation to safeguard women's rights, paving the way to women's empowerment.

Muslim Women in the Eyes of the Law: Their Rights in Private Spheres

In 1997 Masdar F. Mas'udi, a neo-modernist, published *Islam dan Hak-Hak Reproduksi Perempuan: Dialog Fiqih Pemberdayaan*[47] (Islam and Reproduction Rights: The *Fiqh* of Empowerment Dialogue). Mas'udi's publication is highly valued for its authenticity and originality, as it is an interpretation of women's rights in Indonesian Islamic settings. Mas'udi's argument is that reproduction rights as women's rights is hardly touched by Muslim scholars in the Islamic world, partly because it is a controversial issue for the Indonesian public, but

mainly because it challenges the notion that reproduction issues should be a closed corpus discussed only within the walls of domesticity. In the introduction to Mas'udi's publication Saparinah Sadli, a champion of women's movements in Indonesia, posits that Mas'udi's work demystifies general assumptions that women are emotional beings with no brain, while men are endowed with full rational capacity. Mas'udi uses a dialogue between two women as an example, one a female student of *pesantren*, the other her mentor – *ibu nyai*, the wife of the kyai who usually chairs the *pesantren*, discussing women's issues of reproduction rights from women's own perspectives, and grounds the dialogue in everyday language with references to verses of the Qur'an and *hadith*s. Mas'udi sets out to prove that women are indeed capable of productive rational reasoning just as good as men. In presenting his perspective, Mas'udi challenges the taboos of discussing sexuality in public because he supports the notion of *woman's body woman's rights*. [48] He believes that reproduction rights are women's rights because any reproduction issue is concerned with the woman's body, locating her body in the centrality of any discussion.

One of the issues that Mas'udi touches is a woman's right to decide the number of children she bears. This is closely linked to contemporary population problems in Indonesia. Indonesia is one of the most populous countries in the world and its population continues to grow rapidly. Mas'udi identifies this problem and engages with it, placing it within religious settings that affect the everyday lives of Indonesian Muslim women. He echoes the argument of one Indonesian Muslim woman pioneer of women's rights, Maftuchah Yusuf, who asserts that one possible solution to population problems is granting women reproduction rights: 'the wives [must] decide for themselves how many children they want and when they want them', which in return will contribute to altering 'female human resources into productive manpower.'[49] Mas'udi outlines five rights that will enable women to be conscious of their reproduction rights and become empowered. The right to: choose her marital partner; to enjoy sexual intercourse; to decide on pregnancy and the number of children to have; and to initiate repudiation. The author strongly argues that Islam sanctions these rights for women, despite the fact that they are denied for women in many contemporary Muslim countries (including Indonesia) because the process of decision-making in all issues still lies in the hands of men. Mas'udi concludes that in terms of gender relations, to achieve justice and equality Islam should be worked and reworked.

Nursyahbani Katjasungkana is amongst the Indonesian Muslim feminists who put considerable focus on women's position in the legal system. A lawyer herself, Katjasungkana follows other feminist legal scholars in challenging the Marriage Law of 1974, which she believes is

based on the concept of patriarchy because the role distinction between the husband and the wife explicated in the articles of the law produces inequality between the two.[50] The application of *shari'a* (Islamic law) in Nanggro Aceh Darussalam (NAD – previously the province of Aceh), legalised under UU No. 44 Tahun 1999, and proposals for similar implementation in several local regions in Indonesia are controversial. Critics of *shari'a* implementation argue that women's voices are never taken into account in deciding whether *shari'a* should or should not be implemented in a region. The contribution of more than half of the population seems to be intentionally subdued, and such silencing also takes place in other aspects of the legal system that affect women's lives. Katjasungkana argues that the Marriage Law in theory, limiting the practice of polygamy, still does not safeguard women's rights, since abuses and violations – the practice of *kawin bawah tangan or kawin siri* – still occur (as discussed elsewhere earlier in this chapter).

Katjasungkana's critics are vocal, for in Indonesia family life is still regarded as the core of the community, sustaining its values, norms and traditions. Nevertheless, Katjasungkana is correct in demanding amendment of the Marriage Law as a matter of urgency, because its effect on both family and societal levels is immense, especially in terms of husband and wife relations. One should call attention to the issue of marital rape that in the consciousness of Indonesian Muslims seems to be non-existent. Not until recently did the issue of marital rape appear in public discourse. Previously, from an understanding that Islam requires the wife's total obedience toward her husband (based on one verse in the Qur'an, *Sura* An-Nisa verse 34 which says that in order to ensure her obedience, wife beating is sanctioned in Islam if the wife is conducting *nusyusy* – disloyalty and ill conduct), violence against the wife was not recognisable in the Islamic household. Although many scholars interpret the verse to mean wife beating should be conducted lightly and not intentionally to torture, many have misused the verse. However, contemporary Muslim scholars such as Riffat Hassan, Ashgar Engineer, Fatima Mernisi have begun to question the judicial legality of the husband's right to beat his wife[51] and Indonesian Muslim feminists such as Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin and Farha Ciciek have begun to address such problems in Indonesian contexts. This is not an easy task, for the *fiqh* in Indonesia is largely the product of classic interpretation. Drawing on statistics recorded by Kalyanamitra – an NGO working on women's issues, Farha Ciciek's studies[52] show that rape is mostly carried out by those regarded as 'protectors', such as a father (in the case of a father raping his daughter), or an employer (in the case of the employer raping the female servant working for his family). Statistics on marital rape, where a husband forces his wife to have sexual intercourse, are unavailable, meaning that marital rape is kept secret

within the domestic sphere, seemingly untouched by any legal system. When a case does manage to reach state authorities the authorities refuse to participate in resolving the case, claiming that it is a domestic matter. This is also true for domestic violence, abuse of the wife or any other form of violence that happens in the domestic sphere.

Dzuhayatin argues that marital rape is not defined as such because marriage itself is defined in a patriarchal mode where the husband has power over his wife.[53] If marriages were built on the concept of equal sexual relations, marital rape would be viewed as the imposition of force.[54] Codification of the Indonesian legal system has yet to include articles concerning marital rape, but raising the issue in the public sphere is crucial if new and better gender relations are to be won for women. A verse in the Qur'an referring to the matrimonial relationship states: 'they are your garments and you are their garment (...)'.[55] This verse alone definitely guarantees mutual and equal nuptial relations in which both sides are endorsed with equal responsibilities and rights. Therefore, denying the existence of marital rape by saying that it is impossible in Muslim households is denying the very notion of equality and justice in Islamic teachings.

Jilbab: Between the Politics of Identity and Body Politics

There has never been any discourse that puts Muslim women's private matters into the public arena more than the discourse on the *jilbab*.[56] In Indonesia, *jilbab* is another name for terms such as *chador* in Iran, *purdah* in India or Pakistan, *milayat* in Lybia, *charshaf* in Turkey, *hijab* in some African-Arab countries such as Egypt, Sudan and Yemen.[57] Although the term *jilbab* is not intended to be a simple translation of those terms mentioned there is a close association. In Indonesia *jilbab* is a head cover that considerably differs from the type called *kerudung* commonly donned by Muslim women of an older generation, although some younger female Muslims such as Yeni Wahid, the daughter of the former president Abdurrahman Wahid, wears it as well. Indonesia today is no different from many other Islamic countries in the growing number of female Muslims donning the *jilbab*, especially in urban areas. In the mid-1980s the wearing of the *jilbab* was not encouraged by the state; words such as *jilbab beracun* (poisonous *jilbab*) were not uncommon and the wearing of the *jilbab* was criticised as a manifestation of Arabic influence and not an Islamic one. The state even prohibited the donning of the *jilbab* in public non-religious schools and government offices and female Muslim students of those schools were denied their schooling rights if they refused to unveil themselves, just as female civil servants in their offices. These students went on strike de-

manding their right to veil and to assert their identity as devout Muslims. The *jilbab* was used to signify that they were Muslims of the *santri* class and thus different from the non-*santri* class. Political and social shifts have changed the situation. Nowadays, the donning of the *jilbab* is no longer seen as an adherence to a foreign mode of dress, or as symbolic of resistance to the oppressive power of the state, nor does it differentiate *santri* from non-*santri;* it is seen as choice.[58]

Brenner's study, although limiting itself to the narratives of women from the educated middle-class (college and university students), indicates that veiling is linked closely with the politics of identity. Being modern, being a 'good' Muslim, being non-Western are amongst the *raison d'être* of veiling. In the construction of one's identity as a devout Muslim the *jilbab* is seen as a form of acceptance of Islamic discipline and more religious commitment.[59] Herein, the *jilbab* symbolises the so-called 'purification' of being a 'true' and 'good' Muslim through the exercising of self-discipline and self-obedience. Nonetheless, as in the global context, discussed in the preceding chapter, there are similar meanings of either imprisonment or liberation in the Indonesian context. The implementation of *shari'a* in Nanggro Aceh Darussalam requires both men and women alike to cover their bodies according to the standards set by Islam. This means that men must wear at least knee-length shorts or trousers and buttoned shirts while women are to don the *jilbab*. In Banda Aceh, the provincial capital, *shari'a* police often carry out inspections in order to make sure that people have followed this regulation in public spaces. However, women become the main target and men are rarely inspected. The implementation of *shari'a* is often criticised for its emphasis on symbolic meanings (such as veiling for women) rather than completely exercising Islamic ideals of social justice and equality. Interestingly, studies show that the majority of female sex workers in NAD also veil themselves in order to cover their identity. In an attempt to gain respect and recognition in public life these women disguise their identity by masquerading themselves with an item of clothing that is commonly charged as a symbol of Islamic decency and morality.[60]

Some occasions also highlight the temporality of *jilbab* wearing. For example, *jilbab* wearing by Indonesian celebrities (actresses, movie stars, singers), especially in television programmes during *Ramadhan* (the fasting month). Such a trend is adopted more as a means of marketing strategy, than as religious commitment, for when *Ramadhan* is over these women simply unveil. Furthermore, there are women who wear the *jilbab* only when they go to work; others only on special or formal occasions such as weddings, religious celebrations and rites of passage celebrations. *Jilbab* donning on these occasions simply relates to the occasion. Certainly on formal occasions wearing the *jilbab* can hold

a statement of religious identity, but at the same time it is also a fashion statement.

The *jilbab* as an item of clothing indeed covers both private and public spheres in Indonesia, and there are diverse discourses on the significance of donning the *jilbab*. Some scholars comment that the Qur'an and *hadith* have no settlement on the obligation of *jilbab* wearing for women: seeing *jilbab* imposition as an institutionalised local practice rather than normative teaching. For these scholars women themselves should decide whether to veil or not.[61] Others, such as Islamists, say that veiling is an obligation, those without it will be condemned to be *kafir* (non-believer, non-Muslim). For them, the *jilbab* is the political manifestation of their resistance to secular government, and of their commitment to the establishment of an Islamic state in Indonesia. In charging the *jilbab* with political meaning they thus pull it from the female private domain into the public arena.

Umar observes that the *jilbab* may serve symbolically as a signification of fashion, privacy and resistance.[62] However, as a clothing element attached to a woman's body, the *jilbab* should be included in the politics of *woman's body woman's rights*. The politicisation of veiling is an upshot of the plurality it bears; it may suggest an ideological conception of a certain group, it may act as a social phenomenon, it may be used as a sexual segregation, it may denote a patriarchal symbol, it may also represent a special restriction, it may engender self-empowerment, and so forth. The *jilbab* then is a pluralistic phenomenon, having layers of meanings and contexts, depending on the perspectives of the wearers. Simple reduction of symbols into one meaning may erode the complexities it builds and is built upon.

Indonesian Islamic Feminisms

Indonesian Muslim feminists, including Wardah Hafidz, Lies Marcoes, Nurul Agustina, Farha Ciciek, Siti Ruhaini Dzuhatin, Saparinah Sadli and many other advocates of women's rights, are using feminist perspectives to locate women's issues as an integral part of national social issues. They are endeavouring to deconstruct the various normative religious notions of gender relations that are commonly used by the patriarchy to sustain their hegemony.[63] These feminists no longer emphasise their stipulation of women's opportunities in public participation, but they require equal gender relations in all aspects of their lives. Unfortunately, their work is not without challenge. The rejection of feminism, especially within the Islamic paradigm, strongly reflects societal perceptions that feminism is of Western origin, a construction designed by the 'enemy' of Islam to attack Islamic values.[64] Parallel

with the global context, it is a perception of feminism typical of conservative and orthodox doctrines, while in accord with the global context Muslims of liberal or moderate doctrines tend to welcome the feminist movement. According to Wardah Hafidz, a leading Indonesian Muslim feminist, feminism can be classified as a counter-culture to set values in the society that are already deeply imbued with the authority of patriarchy.[65] Feminism confronts the legitimacy of this patriarchy. In the end, feminism and its derivative – Islamic feminism – struggle in order to build a better society for both men and women where individual freedom is recognised and guaranteed under a non-discriminatory legal system. It is believed that Islam was founded to eradicate any discrimination, creating an ideal community in which the underpinning ideology is justice and equality. Such was the community envisioned by the Prophet Muhammad, and Islamic feminism can be viewed as a rebirth of this vision.

3 Women Writers in the Indonesian Literary Tradition

Although women writers have always existed in the Indonesian literary tradition just as long as their male counterparts, the following discussion will start from the 1970s when women writers began to play a stronger role in Indonesian fiction. In the previous era, in the light of A. Teeuw's perspectives, although women have long contributed their writings to the then Dutch East Indies literature, their names only foreshadowed their male counterparts. Not until the 1970s were women's writings taken into account in Indonesian literature.[1]

Women Writers and Popular Fictions of the 1970s-1980s

As has been noted it is difficult to place authors within a rigid timeframe. However, the feature of each generation, though relatively subtle, is apparent, particularly the fictional narratives written by women writers often labelled by Teeuw as 'lady-authors'. The 1970s-1980s saw the appearance of many new authors; however, the following discussion will be limited to female authors whose works were closely associated with the general issues of the time.

From the 1970s on there was a significant growth of women's magazines, such as *Kartini*, *Femina*, *Dewi*, *Sarinah*, and *Gadis,* all of which gave considerable space to women's fiction. Newspapers such as *Kompas* also made room for short stories, and novels in serial form, which led to a boom in the so-called *Sastra Koran* (newspaper literature). *Sastra Koran*, in existence since the colonial era, refers to the publication of various genres of literary works in newspapers, usually in weekend editions or in literary supplements. *Sastra Koran* itself is controversial. Bandel argues that *Sastra Koran* is inherently 'dangerous' for the development of Indonesian literature as this literature is too dominant over literary magazines, and the writings published would depend entirely in the hands of the newspaper editors - not literary editors.[2] Bandel's argument might be an exaggeration. *Sastra Koran* perhaps defies the definition of literature in conventional sense, but through *Sastra Koran* a number of writers have indeed established their position in Indonesian literature, such as Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim. *Sastra Koran* itself

has also given birth to local writers such as Sirikit Syah and Lan Fang of Surabaya. With the help of local newspapers where *Sastra Koran* is part of the weekend edition, local newspapers like *Jawa Pos* in Surabaya has given room to local writers to publish their works in its literary section. Local writers of non Jakarta residents usually have difficulties to have their works published in Jakarta-based national newspapers like *Kompas* or *Republika*; *Sastra Koran* of the local newspapers can be their channel for such literary creativity.

In the 1970s and 1980s national political stability and economic development fostered the growth of a reading public and film industry. People who had lived in unstable social conditions since the beginning of the century now enjoyed a bit of luxury, such as reading colourful and glossy magazines, which had been extremely scarce in previous years. Toety Herawati observes:

> It was in the '70s that novel-writing flourished, paralleled with the boom in women's magazines mentioned earlier. Many of these novels were published in book form after their publication in the magazines as serials. Preceded by Marga T., old and new names made their appearance: La Rose, Yati Maryati Wiharja, Marianne Katoppo, Iskaiah Sumarto, Sri Bekti Subakin, Totilawati Tjitrawisata, Titiek W.S., Sulistyowati Edison, Titi Said Sadikun and, last but not least, Nh. Dini. Their style of expression differed entirely from that of their predecessors. They wrote in a light, popular style, easily comprehensible and enjoyable.[3]

The transfer from book to film focused more attention on these women authors. Popular writing, which was previously seen to be marginal, begian to develop into a new body of Indonesian literature. However, critics often denigrated them as writers of popular fiction rather than literary fiction. The stories of domesticity and private affairs were alleged to be inferior to men's public narratives. Jacob Sumarjo, as quoted by Toety Heraty, for example, identifies their works as popular novels in opposition to literary novels because their narratives are 'more the achievement of a craftsman and not a product of creativity.' Yet Sumarjoalso argues that 'the women's "pop" novels are more delicate and as such "not endangering morality", unlike those with "pornographic" tendencies (...) which are the characteristics of popular novels written by male colleagues.'[4] According to Sumarjo the narratives in popular fiction suffer from a lack of the originality and uniqueness that literary narratives must embody. Still, Sumarjo appears to be sympathetic to this genre. Despite all his criticism he believes that the mature use of language packed in a complex plot is full of surprise, suspense,

humour and colloquial discourse, making these narratives 'meaningful' and 'functional'.

Largely telling about love life experiences and man-woman love relationship, these writings, by and large, ignore social and political issues that women have to face in maintaining their existence.[5] As romance is placed in the top rank of thematic significance, such popular writings relinquish the dynamics and complexities of women's position in society. Female vision employed in the narratives is a limited romantic one. Critics have noted that these women authors are writing female characters as a projection of how men look at women. This is obvious in the romantic pop novels, in which the portrayal of women never goes beyond a girl in search of an everlasting love; she may be urban and educated, yet she is content to be male dominated. The Javanese adage that says a girl should not have as high an education as a man, for in the end her place is in the kitchen, is perfectly suited to the stories of Indonesian romance fiction.

There are indeed many authors that can be seen as *sastra pop* (popular literature) writers. To name a few: Ike Soepomo, Maria A. Sarjono, La Rose, Mira W., and probably the champion of all, Marga T., as she is known to be one the forerunners of this genre. Marga T.'s *Karmila I and II* (1975) received a great deal of attention and was made into a film. *Karmila*, like most popular fictions, is set in an urban setting, styled in easy reading fashion, revolves around the love relationship between a girl and a young man, and closes with a happy ending. Again, typical of Indonesia's popular narratives, the protagonists enjoy a quite respectable social position: they have tertiary education and come from wealthy families or at least middle-class. What should be noted in the story is the rape of Karmila by Feisal, who later marries Karmila because she becomes pregnant. Karmila does not seem to have the reader's sympathy even though she is the victim of rape. The reason for the lack of sympathy is because directly after the birth of her child Karmila refuses to fulfil her motherhood role. Tineke Hellwig critically reads this scene:

> [T]he story is focalized so as to create more reader sympathy for Feisal, who shows his regret and is humble, than for Karmila, who is indifferent and even heartless toward her son. When Karmila finally realizes that she has responsibilities as Fani's mother, this insight is presented as the best she could have. Even though rape brought them together, Karmila remains faithful to Feisal as the first man in her life and the father of her child.[6]

The fact that though Karmila is raped the reader's sympathy goes to Feisal, is a conflicting terrain in the light of feminist reading. The portrayal of Feisal as the villain simply disappears. He even reappears as a hero who, at the end of the story, saves Karmila from her denial of motherhood. Despite Karmila's success as a female doctor, her femaleness is not complete unless she fulfils her motherhood role – her *kodrat*. Until then, she will forever lack the reader's sympathy. Here also, sexual division of labour is perceived as mainstream gender ideology, its violation means disrupting order. As Krisna Sen observes for Indonesian cinema, disorder is often viewed as criticism of a working woman facing a crisis. To overcome disorder, a woman must come to the realisation that her occupation in the public sphere (Karmila's profession as a medical doctor) neglects her 'natural' positioning in the private sphere (motherhood). Restoration of order can only happen if she repositions herself to private occupation (motherhood).[7] This is the theme of Karmila; she finally accepts her motherhood role, therefore embracing her ideal femininity and lives happily ever after.

This does not mean that in this period Indonesian literature was fully preoccupied with romantic novels. Though small in number there were other more literary writers, many of whom are still productive today. Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim is one example and she will be discussed later in a more detailed manner. As with *Sastra Koran*, the emergence of popular novels helped to increase the numbers of the Indonesian reading public. When this type of novel first appeared in the 1920s it was known as *roman picisan* ('dime novels'). *Roman picisan* were romance stories, usually in paperback edition, and the name derives from the price of the story in the colonial period; one *picis* (one pence in Dutch colonial currency) for one book. In the 1970s the name *roman picisan* was hardly ever used because very few people knew what *picis* meant, thus the genre was renamed. Even today, the popularity of this genre is indeed largely linked with the cheap price. In urban areas there are shops where these novels and comic books can be rented or bought for little money. When novels such as *Karmila*, and *Kabut Sutera Ungu* (Silky Violet Mist, 1979) by Ike Soepomo, were made into movies, they were box office hits.

Women's writings, regardless of the genre, may function well as women's effort to authorise their female gaze on their own body and experience. Within the domain of the politics of feminist reading, women's stories, by women, will determine how texts are perceived in looking at what it means critically to be a woman or man. The many kinds of women's writings, be it *sastra pop* (popular literature) or *sastra serius* (*sastra berbobot*, serious literature) deserve attention because their writings provide documentation of women's concerns, and this reveals the intertwined relationship between the author, society and the reader.

Toety Herati's long poem *Calon Arang* and Ike Soepomo's *Kabut Sutera Ungu* are perfect examples of such intertwining. Toety's work is known to be part of *sastra berbobot*, while Ike's is *sastra pop*. Nevertheless, they both express a similar notion of what it means to be a *janda* (widow). *Jandas* have always been subjected to prejudices and ill treatment in society. As an older widow, Calon Arang is victimised by her portrayal as a wicked witch, and the younger one, Miranti in *Kabut Sutra Ungu* is continually seen as a seducer. Hellwig posits how a *janda* is perceived in *Kabut Sutra Ungu*:

> A (young) *janda* is considered to be a woman who has nothing to lose – neither her husband nor her virginity – and who tries to lure married men astray. *Jandas* [widows] are distrusted by their own sex, not by men, who too are prone to have extramarital affairs. Miranti's experience is that no matter what a *janda* does, she is viewed with suspicion.[8]

The recording of the widow's positioning by Toety Herati and Ike Soepomo, despite the differences, shows that women's writing of any kind is respectful of identity politics. These writings signify implications of both individual and social levels in which an identity is perceived. A widow is stereotyped by double marginalisation, by her own sex and by men. The picture of a *janda* may well function as a channel for both authors to show a 'denigrated identity' that has been taken for granted by social norms, and to show also that such identification is loaded with patriarchal oppression. *Janda* is a signification of oppression; a *duda* (widower) is never subjected to similar denigration. A widow, who is assumed to be independent of men, is seen as a threat, thus, necessarily, she will have to be caged by a derogatory identity such as a wicked witch or a seducer. The perception of the *janda* in the world's largest Muslim society is certainly problematic. It is frequently stated in the Qur'an, that *jandas*, orphans and the poor are those primarily deserving shelter and a guarantee of protection from all societal members. Regarding *jandas* in a deprecating way is against the spirit of the Islam. In Indonesian life there is a weight of cultural meaning attached to the name *janda*, which heavily reveals patriarchal domination over the Islamic spirit of equality and justice.

The Pendulum of the Millennium: Liberation of the Generation 2000

With the fall of Soeharto's New Order regime in 1998 new channels of liberalism emerged. Women's political, social and cultural activism

flourished. Women's involvement in almost every aspect of life levitated significantly, particularly their engagement with literary writings. This does not mean that previously women were non-existent in the tradition of Indonesian literature, but many of them were placed in the margin of the canonised Indonesian literature. Their positioning as popular romance authors, among others, contributed to their marginalisation.

The present generation of writers, *Angkatan 2000* (Generation 2000), positions many young female writers at the heart of mainstream literature: they are classified as writers of *sastra wangi* ('perfumed' literature). The name comes from the members of this group, such as Ayu Utami, Djenar Mahesa Ayu, Fira Basuki, Dewi Lestari, Nova Rianti Yusuf, and others, who are female, young, beautiful, attractive, very urban-centred and cosmopolitan, and most of them have enjoyed celebrity status even before the publication of their writings.[9] The very name s*astra wangi* distinguishes their narratives from their antecedents. If the *Balai Pustaka* generation of the 1920s is marked by the conflict between the individual and *adat*, the *Pujangga Baru* with the nationalist movement, the 1945 with humanism, 1966 with social and political protest, and the 1970s-1980s with popular fiction, generation 2000 is identified with liberalism in every aspect of their writings. The writings are often harsh with no pretence of morality, and full of everyday slang and social references.

Ayu Utami, the most popular of the *canon*[10], is known for bringing the discourse of sex into her writings. Her novels *Saman* (1998) and *Larung* (2000) 'display wildness and openness, which gives a very spacious room for freedom.'[11] Issues previously taboo are relocated from the private to the public world. This new trend in Indonesian literature was entrenched with the publication of Dewi Lestari's *Supernova*, and Djenar Mahesa Ayu's *Jangan Bermain Main dengan Kelaminmu* (Don't Play with Your Genitals, 2001). Drawing on a cosmopolitan world they know very well, these writers place their stories and novels in 'urban settings, peopled with hip intellectuals whose speech is sprinkled with English phrases, no different than the young executives gathering for a drink at a café after work.'[12] The language used is fresh, alive, and loaded with colloquial speech narration; covering all topics from sex, drugs, homosexuality and politics. The audacity of these young writers is highly valued, as they construct new images of young modern Indonesian women who are unconventionally reactive in responding to the problems of modern life. Hatley posits:

> The range of themes addressed by women fiction writers in recent years has greatly expanded; their freer representation of sexuality includes among other things considerable reference to

> lesbianism. And several texts by women authors appearing during the last few years challenge the archetypal images (...) of faithful wife, alluring but threatening temptress and monstrous widow-witch. The new interpretations boldly refute accepted, age-old meanings. What is suggested is both a perception of ongoing social force of gender assumptions embodied in these ancient symbols, and a commitment to opening up new visions of 'female' and 'male' by dismantling them. Other writers, meanwhile, create new myths for this new time, from the flow of daily life or from futuristic images.[13]

In the hands of these writers, images of women deviate considerably from previous images of submissive women victimised by patriarchal domination. These new images undeniably picture women as holders of the world and their own destiny, no longer as subdued individuals whose nature is determined by a prescribed role of dutiful woman whose subsistence is worthy only of a man's pleasure. Nevertheless, as groundbreaking as the images in *sastra wangi* are, because their characters are members of the burgeoning urban middle- and upper-classes with higher education and global experiences (many of the settings are placed overseas in New York, London and Singapore), they seemingly refer to only a small number of Indonesian women. Other stories need to be translated to the concerns of the majority of Indonesian women – suburban and rural – who are, by and large, still victimised by patriarchal domination.

The emergence of *sastra wangi* is not without disputes. The junction between literary writings (novels, short stories or plays), female characters or authors and sex has never been taken into account as in *sastra wangi*. Pros and cons whether women writers should or should not portray sex blatantly in their writings is a contested terrain. In his cultural speech, Taufiq Ismail, a champion of Indonesian Islamic writings believes that the time when shame is no longer embraced by Indonesian literary writers has come.[14] He calls this sort of writing *sastra syahwat* (Indonesian, literally meaning: sexual desires) or *sastra selangkang* (Indonesian, literally meaning: groin).[15] Taufiq's strong criticism was immediately followed by a polemic in columns in some Indonesian newspapers. On the one hand, Taufiq and other writers like Muhammad Subarkah were against the bringing of sex into literature, especially sexual taboos and vulgarity, while on the other hand, writers like Hudan Hidayat and Mariana Amiruddin celebrate the freedom of expression, particularly of women writers, through offering sex discourse in fiction.[16] Djenar Mahesa Ayu, one of the leading figures in *sastra wangi*, disagrees with the term, saying that it is discriminative because the gender of the writers overpowers the issues that they write about,

although it is true that in *sastra wangi*, in Djenar Mahesa Ayu's works for example, they do explore women's sexuality (though not so much about sex), and bigger issues such as domestic abuse against women, patriarchal domination over women's sexualityand issues in feminism.[17] Bodden and Hellwig argue that these *sastra wangi* writers take up new literary and social issues in modern Indonesian literature asserting issues raised in their writings covering a much wider social scope, such as 'issues of government coercions toward the nation's citizens and the injustice of the gap between the rich and the poor, (...) masculinist ideological structures and social patterns, violence by adults against children and marital infidelity.'[18]

The dispute over *sastra wangi* still continues to this day. Perhaps, it is wise to follow what M. Faizi, a Madurese poet says. In his words, the problematic sex in fiction also needs to listen to what readers have to say, yet, this has hardly been done. Instead of having such a never-ending polemic, it is about time to ask readers their opinions, particularly those poor readers believing that literary reading is still a luxury. Writers write in relation to their readers' conditions and it is the sacred duty of a writer to show readers the 'truth'.[19] Faizi reminds us of the crucial role of readers. The polemic of sex discourse in fiction still largely neglects the readers' perspective about it. Though it may be said that fictional narratives on sex by *sastra wangi* writers are widely read, the questions that follow are necessary to problematise: which readers? urban readers? rural readers? from which economic, social and cultural levels? Again, the relationship between a writer, her/his works, and her/his readers and the existing contexts of production and literary environment cannot be eradicated when talking about issues or trends in literature. And the most important question is perhaps, which media and capital giants help this *sastra wangi* to become successful, because, unfortunately, members of *sastra wangi* are mostly centered in Jakarta. These mostly Jakarta-based women writers are nonetheless metropolitan dwellers – only very few (if not none) are rural natives. It is worth noting that media (newspapers, magazines) that frequently cite their names are considerably from Jakarta; local writers and newspapers are largely ignorant about this. In local media such as *Radar Surabaya* (a local Surabayanese newspaper) or *Panjebar Semangat* (a Javanese weekly magazine published in Surabaya) local writers hardly touch the sex discourse in their narratives. Indonesian literature today is not only based on region; the phenomenon of sex discourse of *sastra wangi* writings certainly enriches the development of Indonesian literature; however, local or regional or provincial trends, voices and issues are in need of being embraced. The conflicts between *kaum tua* (those of the older generation persisting in the *adat/local custom*) and *kaum muda* (those of younger generations ready to break away from the confine-

ment of *adat*) in Minangkabau stories which strongly influenced the 1920s Indonesian literature have shown that local or regional issues could colour the highlights of Indonesian literary writings as much as the metropolitan influences.[20]

Contemporary Indonesian writing has also seen the emergence of the so-called 'chick lit' (chick literature), a genre in popular writing different, although often assumed to be similar, to the more serious *sastra wangi*. *Sastra wangi* writings have philosophically deep narratives, but still lack moral pretension. 'Chick-lit' writings on the other hand, have hilarious narratives dealing with women facing modern problems in their work and social life. 'Chick lit' narratives are always set in urban environments, and have stories of young cosmopolitan working women aged in their twenties or thirties concerned with issues such as fashion, shopping, sex, and the search for 'Prince Charming'. Unlike the highly romanticised fiction of the 1970s/80s, 'chick lit' is humorous and very light reading; the book covers are always in pastel colours with illustration à la Barbie. 'Chick lit' is not of Indonesian origin. It first appeared in Britain with the publication Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones' Diary* in 1999. This was followed by Melissa Bank's *The Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing* in 2000 and a series of 'chick lit' writings, *Being Single and Happy*. The Indonesian translation of these books only appeared in 2003, but was immediately followed by local Indonesian 'chick lit', frequently cited as *Lajang Kota* (Urban Single). Writings of *Lajang Kota* are Fira Basuki's Ms. B's series: *Panggil Aku B* (Call me B, 2004) and *Will You Marry Me?* (2004) and Alberthine Endah's *Jodoh Monika* (Monika's Soulmate, 2004).

'Chick lit's' popularity is viewed cynically by a number of literary critics and feminist activists. Gadis Arivia, an outstanding feminist, and the founder of *Jurnal Perempuan* (Women's Journal) believes that 'chick lit' is utopian for Indonesian settings. Indonesian women are still much troubled with gender issues such as domestic violence, child labour and problems with a gender-biased legal system, but 'chick lit' largely ignores ideological and social realities discriminative to women. Accordingly some feminists say that 'chick lit' is a betrayal of the feminist movement.[21] Despite the feminist criticism of 'chick lit', numerous female readers are infatuated with such stories and the genre's popularity is increasing. Unlike romantic narratives where female depiction is always 'perfect' – beautiful, dutiful, faithful and willing to finally accept patriarchal domination – 'chick lit' stories are tales of middle-class female white collar workers who struggle to maintain their job and career. They are 'not perfect' – not that beautiful, not that smart, but they are obsessed with physical perfection. The 'not perfect' produces strong identification with readers, creating a fictional reality

closer to the reader's reality. However, as realistic as it may seem 'chick lit' represents only very few women living in cosmopolitan regions.

4 Authors, Their Worlds and the Female Traditions

The variety of themes that contemporary Indonesian female authors deal with is extended by those who are not classified as members of either *sastra wangi* or 'chick lit'. Abidah El Khalieqy and Helvy Tiana Rosa, and their older counterparts Titis Basino and Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim are among this group of women writers. If most *sastra wangi*'s characters are urban-centred, the characters of these four authors vary from traditional older women to young modern figures. The four can be classified as Muslim writers whose narratives vividly account for religious identification and whose works are known to be part of Islamic writings. Helvy Tiana Rosa argues that Islamic writing aims to enlighten its readers on the discourse of truth and love: love for God and all humans. Admitting that her definition is too wide, she then adds that the morals of such writings must be justifiable within the parameters of Islamic faith. Open sexual talk, sexual taboos that mostly colour *sastra wangi* writings (that she calls as 'cheap pornography')[1], for example, are indisputably non-Islamic because the discourse of sex in Islamic environments should reside in the private arena and never brought out into the public arena. Furthermore, Islamic writings are universal in truth, justice and humanity.[2] This is where the four writers depart from the writers of *sastra wangi* or the even more popular 'chick lit'. Their writings can be deemed as a *canon counter-discourse* because not only do their writings raise issues different from *sastra wangi* they also depict many more Muslim women identities: young, old, urban and rurals struggling to maintain and challenge their prescribed roles. In *sastra wangi* writings, religious identity is left unquestioned, while in their writings, these four writers repeatedly raise religious issues as an important aspect. Where modern Indonesian literature is now much occupied by the writings of *sastra wangi* and the more popular 'chick lit', their narratives stand at the margin of the more canonised *sastra wangi*; accordingly labelling their writings as a *canon counter-discourse* is justifiable. Their stories are balanced, but at the same time a threat, as they reveal how their female characters negotiate their daily lives in a male dominated society where women's roles are firmly affixed to that of men.

Helvy's short stories centre on young Muslim females and their struggles to preserve their religious identity, making her a prominent figure in the tradition of Indonesian Islamic writing. Abidah's works show a similar trend but she emphasises *pesantren* scenes in her narratives. In comparison to Helvy and Abidah, Ratna and Titis write in a more general manner. Nonetheless, their religiousness, though subtly presented, becomes more obvious when a critical reading is employed. Both authors' narratives commonly take place in suburban or rural settings with stories of women facing problems in their day-to-day lives. In addition, if Ratna often illustrates women who are essentially patronised by men, Titis always ends her novels with a short poem to illustrate that humaneness lies in the hand of God: only God can control a person's life. Titis' works end with the narrator's submission to destiny, typical of the Javanese philosophical conception of *nrimo* (one's life is predetermined by one's own destiny). Moreover, in these writers' works, the Arabic words imported into their Indonesian, such as the use of *Allah* instead of *Tuhan* (both meaning God) are quite common.

Besides the four selected writers, there are certainly other writers, Kartini, Saadah Alim (1897-1968), Titi Said (b. 1935) to name but a few. The issues that appear in their writings are not so dissimilar from these selected four, though Kartini also raises several issues such as her demands to improve women's roles and status through education, while Saadah Alim and Titie Said (b. 1935) write mostly fictions about women as mothers and wives.[3] None of these writers is classified as writers conveying religious identity, except for Marianne Katoppo with her religious world of Christianity. Women writers in Indonesia are regarded as women writers and their works seldom (if not to say never) touch religious identity.

Unless otherwise stated the following description is primarily taken from interviews with each individual writer; published interviews and newspaper clippings which add some clarification are noted.

Titis Basino P.I.

Titis Basino P.I. (P.I. stands for her husband's name Purnomo Ismadi) is the eldest of the four. This eighth of nine children of the Javanese Basino Atmodiwiryo family was born in Magelang, Central Java, January 7, 1939. She then spent her childhood in Madiun, and moved to Purwokerto with her family where she finished high school. Her writing career started during her secondary education as a writer of *majalah dinding* (a high school magazine posted on the school wall). Her tertiary education was at the *Fakultas Sastra* (Faculty of Letters) *Universitas Indonesia*, Jakarta, where she graduated *Sarjana Muda* (equivalent

to B.A) in Indonesian literature in 1962. She then had a short career (1962-1963) as a flight attendant with the national airline, *Garuda Indonesia*.[4] Titis spent her earliest childhood under Japanese rule and grew up in post-colonial Indonesia where she enjoyed the opportunity of having a tertiary education. Experiencing the ways in which Indonesia shifted from a colonial to post-colonial society certainly enriched her knowledge of societal changes, and how a society perceives and deals with such changes. Her work as a flight attendant also provided her with opportunities to experience public life and make contact with people from different backgrounds. Although her later choice of becoming a housewife was a different route from her modern job as flight attendant, seemingly Titis always positioned herself in the public sphere, exemplified by her career choices of flight attendant, writer, and as the Chair of a literary documentation organisation.

She is currently living in Jakarta, her adopted city since 1958. Although she comes from a large family Titis herself only has four children. The Javanese saying '*banyak anak banyak rejeki*' (having more children means having more 'windfalls' or 'incomes'), does not seem to be followed in post-1960s Indonesia because Titis' generation was usually influenced by the government's comprehensive family planning programme. To a certain degree, it can be said that through her writings Titis campaigns for the family planning programme. In her works, family size usually consists of parents with two or three children: a nuclear family description. In identifying her fictionalised families as nuclear she takes a new direction; the 'modern' family is nuclear, as opposed to the 'traditional' extended family. In terms of family size the 1970s' generation has even less children: from more than two children per family to just two children at the most per family. In Titis' case, having fewer children compared to her parents gives her more time to pursue her chosen career as she finds more time to write.[5] Furthermore, because her children have their own families, she finds that her presence at home is no longer compulsory, thus she devotes most of her time to public roles.[6]

In the 1960s Titis wrote short stories for the literary magazines *Horison* and *Sastra*, but her professional writing career began with the publication of her first novel, *Pelabuhan Hati* (Harbour of the Heart, 1978). For the span of 10 years, from 1986 to 1996, due to personal reasons and family request, Titis devoted herself to her domestic role and produced very little work. She started writing again in 1997 following the death of her husband in 1996, and up to the present day she has produced at least 20 novels and numerous short stories. Among others these are: *Di Bumi Aku Bersua Di Langit Aku Bertemu* (On Earth I Meet in the Sky I Encounter, 1983); *Bukan Rumahku* (Not My Home, 1986); *Welas Asih Merengkuh Tajali* (Compassion Embraces Love, 1997); *Men-*

sucikan Perselingkuhan (Purifying an Affair, 1998); *Aku Supiyah Istri Hardian* (I am Supiyah Hardian's Wife, 1998); *Tersenyumpun Tidak Untukku Lagi* (Your Smile is Not For Me, 1998); *Tangan Tangan Kehidupan* (The Hands of Life, 1998); *Terjalnya Gunung Batu* (Steep Rocky Mountain, 1998); *Garis Lurus Garis Lengkung* (Straight Line Curved Line, 2000); *Aku Kendalikan Air, Api, Angin dan Tanah* (I Control Water, Fire, Wind and Earth, 1998); *Mawar Hitam Milik Laras* (Laras' Black Rose, 1999); *Sukma dan K. Wekas* (Sukma and K. Wekas, 2000); *Hari Yang Terbaik* (The Best Day, 2000); *Jala* (The Fishing Net, 2002); and *Tabu Pernikahan* (The Marriage Taboo, 2003). In 1998, her novel *Dari Lembah ke Coolibah* (From Valley to Coolibah, 1997) won a literary award from *Pusat Bahasa* (The National Language Centre), and it also won The South-East Asian Writers Award. In 1999, the Malaysian government awarded her the Mastra Prize, a competitive literary award.[7] Still pursuing her writing career, she is also the Chair of the Executive Board of *Pusat Dokumentasi Sastra H.B. Jassin* (H.B. Jassin Centre of Literary Documentation) in Jakarta.

Titis' narratives always depict a women's world, women's problems and how they deal with them, creating exclusively a female perspective. Typical of her stories are the deceptive relationships in which women are victimised, yet from this victimisation they rise to self-empowerment. Titis believes that her portrayal of female characters is her way of 'painting what, who and how women truly are.'[8] She further adds that she aims to narrate women's position as both 'positive' and 'negative'. 'Positive' means that a woman is the equal partner of a man, without her support no man can ever achieve success, while 'negative' means that men often take advantage of women. Although most of her works deal with deception and infidelity, Titis strongly disagrees with bringing the discourse of sex into fiction. In her view the sexual relationship should never be spoken of publicly. She chooses dialogue as her best way to illustrate romantic and intimate relationships. An example of this attitude is found in her novel, *Rumah K. Seribu* (The Thousandth House, 1998). Acclaimed by literary critics, this novel celebrates platonic love. A leading critic, Eka Budianta, observes that the novel substantiates that 'love without sex is a luxury in its own'.[9] Titis believes that writing about sex will only jeopardise her position as a writer of serious literature and she refuses to incorporate sex into her narratives. In her opinion sex is only for popular literature and is often written in a vulgar manner almost bordering on pornography. She argues that serious literature aims to enlighten its readers by suggesting new dimensions of approaching a problem; in this way a writer may function as a psychological interpreter of human problems.[10]

Titis' commitment to communicate female perspectives and concerns entered a deeper stage as she always utilises first person narra-

tive, using '*aku*' ('I') as the narrator. Her consistency to always use the first person narrator deserves attention. Male writers too employ the same technique, yet when portraying women's issues or presenting women's voices, women's own words and perceptions of their situations will bring greater authenticity. The use of the 'I' as the narrator is crucial for women authors as they can justify the female perspective from both the author and narrator. Within the perspective of feminist reading she has also privileged the female body experience through the use of the female perspective. The 'I' pointed out in the narrative signals an opening, a room in the narrative where readers are free to enter, and where they can easily associate themselves with the narrator. Titis gives women a voice, a voice that some women are unable to use. In particular, she gives a voice to women who are deceived by their husbands. She says in one interview:

> Since they cannot scream I let those people know how women feel when they are deceived through infidelity. There are many men who have extramarital affairs but their wives just cannot get angry or say no. I write so that those people can read.[11]

As Titis revealed further in the interview, her stories are not just pure imagination, many of them are real, based on stories of real people. She tries to help these women by suggesting her way of reading their problems and bringing them to life in her literary production. Titis' method of putting real stories into fiction reflects and exemplifies representations of the real. Her power lies in the fact that she does not only represent women of a linear singularity, but different women following the historical changes that these women experience. Accordingly, Titis' protagonists move from the mature aged widow in *Dari Lembah ke Coolibah*, to the young dutiful wife in *Jala*. Her flexibility to write about numerous women coming from different backgrounds, ages and societal structures signals her attempt to write the multiplicity of women. Nevertheless, Titis' characters are largely from a lower social class who struggle to maintain equilibrium when their families undergo chaos caused by the husband's betrayal. Reading Titis' various women thus aims not merely to uncover the 'truth', but also to investigate how such concepts of truth are formed, particularly in the ideological representation of the women characters: how they are manufactured and re-manufactured by the author using real stories of women she knows.

Although Titis celebrates the multiplicity of a woman's role in society: 'A woman must be able to be anything; a mother, a friend, a lover', she also states 'a woman brings numerous images with her: her social, cultural and political status, which regrettably are often forsa-

ken.' Nevertheless, like most women of her generation, she believes women are not to escape from the conception of *kodrat*, thus the sexual division of labour. For her, woman's proper place is at home, and it is a woman's duty to take care of family matters because of her natural role of mother dedicated to domesticity. While encouraging women to occupy public roles through education and labour, she insists that women's primary roles are as a wife, mother, homemaker, and as a worker adding to the family income, but never as the family breadwinner, which should be primarily in the hands of the husband.[12] The most distinctive feature in her narratives is the issue of polygamy and betrayal through extramarital affairs. In coping with such catastrophes her female characters manage to stand upright and in the end it is the female figure who restores the disorder to order; her women are strong, independent and very self-empowered. Titis is a feminist in the sense that she is aware of constraints placed upon women due to their gender, how women sustain their existence in times of chaos, and how women yearn to remove these constraints and build a more equitable gender system.

Although many male authors deal with issues of female empowerment, often these male texts privilege emotional responses and fail to explore the psychological reactions of women to issues such as polygamy and man's infidelity. Titis' representation of reality fiction – her use of 'I' as the narrator in all her books – shows how women can be in control of their own experiences. She advances that the strength of her characters comes from their deep faith in God. All her characters are Muslim and they are always looking to maintain their religious commitment, reflective of her own belief that it is only God we must be submissive to, since God is the owner of all things.[13] Religious identity is embodied in Titis' female characters and her works add to the many ways of reading Muslim women and their representations in literary fictions.

Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim

Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim, or Mbak Ratna as she is frequently called, is one of the most productive short story authors in the Indonesian literary world. Born in Malang, East Java, April 24, 1949, she has produced more than 300 short stories and a novel in the thirty years of her writing career. Unlike Titis who experienced the Japanese occupation – Titis was three years old when the colonial era ended era – Ratna is the product of independent Indonesia. However, like Titis she comes from a large family; she is the fifth daughter of the Saleh Ibrahim family and is unmarried.

Ratna lives in Malang where she undertook all of her education from elementary to tertiary level. She was enrolled in the *Fakultas Ilmu Administrasi* (Faculty of Administration Science) at *Universitas Brawijaya* (Brawijaya University) Malang, but withdrew when she lost interest. Ratna is often invited to numerous seminars and conferences, including the International Seminar of Disabled People in Sydney, Australia; the International Women's Congress in Washington, USA in 1993 and in Beijing, China in 1995; and Leadership Training MIUSA (Mobility International USA) in Eugene, Oregon, USA in 1997. Ratna is also an activist in social organisations: she chaired *Yayasan Bakti Nurani Malang* (an NGO for disabled people) from 1977-2000; was the founder of *Masyarakat Entropic Malang* (Entropic Society Malang, an NGO concerned with environmental issues); and is a researcher for *Yayasan Kebudayaan Panjoeng* (Panjoeng Cultural Foundation, a foundation to develop the local cultures of Malang). She also founded *Kajian Ilmiah Forum Pelangi* (Forum Pelangi Scientific Studies) and a journal called *Naraswari,* which concentrates on issues concerning women and gender equality. She was awarded the *Wanita Berprestasi* (Highly Distinguished Woman) by the Indonesian government in 1993. She has won several awards for her work from women's magazines and newspapers such as *Femina* and *Kompas,* and is also a prize winning poet.

Since she started writing in 1975, numerous of her short stories have been published in collections, including *Namanya Masa* (His Name is Massa, 2001); *Noda Pipi Seorang Perempuan* (A Spot on a Woman's Cheek, 2003); *Aminah Di Satu Hari* (Aminah in One Day, 2002); *Lakon di Kota Kecil* (Drama in a Small Town, 2002); and *Bukan Pinang Dibelah Dua* (Unidentical Twin, 2003). Her novel is entitled *Lemah Tanjung* (Lemah Tanjung, 2003). Ratna is probably part of the *sastra koran* tradition, as her works were scattered in various newspapers such as *Kompas, Jawa Pos* before being issued in collections of short stories. Her productivity and activity are remarkable for she has a physical disability and needs to dictate all her works to her secretary. In her early childhood, Ratna suffered from poliomyelitis, which left her with little use of her hands and legs, so she uses a wheelchair to get around. Despite her physical disability she is indeed one of the most prolific authors in Indonesia.

Ratna's writing focus is on women whom she knows well. She believes that her narratives help shape the women's movement because they also function as a counter discourse of the masculinity that is rooted in the Indonesian public discourse. She writes:

> I think this country is characterised as masculine because of its fondness of the symbols of violence. As an illustration, the biases of patriarchal ideology in this country produce a huge im-

> pact penetrating this country's system, meaning that this country represents itself as male. And what kind of women is raised by such masculine tradition? As a result, as always they [women] become a silent mass and marginal members. Whether we are aware or not, men in this country still believe that women's roles are domestic and social. In all stories the super hero is always male.[14]

Ratna believes that literature is a powerful means to protest against such marginalisation and victimisation, because resistance writings are a powerful media against injustice and oppression. Through writings, Ratna concludes, she can break the silence of women, and enunciate the injustices forced upon them.[15] In order to bring women's voices into public hearing, she then attempts to smash women's marginalisation by repositioning them from the periphery to the centre. She exemplifies this in her newest novel *Lemah Tanjung*, a novel based on a true story. All female characters in the novel resist domination forced upon them. For example, Ibu Indri, one protagonist in the novel, never stops her struggles to protect the only green area in her city against attempts to make it into a shopping mall. Ratna's retelling of Bu Indri's story marks her struggle to place one local woman's history into the public memory. This is exactly how Ratna positions her role as an author: believing that with her writings she can record the history of the women's struggles and bring it to the public's attention:

> I am interested not because I am a historian but because I am trying to be one. The hero is Ibu Indrasih, she is now so terribly ill that she can no longer walk, still with her three children and our group, she keeps on fighting to this day. Talking about history, I am trying to record this local history. (...) So it is a true story. (...) But because I am not an expert in history, I attempt to make it into fiction.[16]

In her effort to document local history Ratna brings locality right into the centre of the public mind, retelling stories of local heroes who are commonly marginalised simply because of their anonymity. In writing these stories, Ratna ruptures the notion of history as a grand narrative by presenting and documenting alternative stories of ordinary people with extraordinary struggles.

A literary work is the soul of its author, Ratna strongly believes. However, it is a product of literary imagination, the factuality in this so-called imaginative world is still reflective of the real: the represented real of its author and her surrounding world, creating the world in a reality of its own. Through her stories Ratna presents us with the revi-

val of social realities in fiction. Her fiction is not a product of literary imagination *per se*; rather, her fiction shows us a reality and awakens our dreams in a story. In an interview, Ratna reveals that her narratives are based on factual research, which is then blended with her imagination, and certainly her reading of such experiences.[17] Furthermore, the politics of her works lie in her goal to treat her fiction as a witness of injustice. She states:

> I can see and feel the masculinity of the social 'texts' which totally harass women socially. And I think it is all caused by patriarchal hegemony that has developed long enough in this country. As a result, I am challenged to write short stories as a witness to those injustices.[18]

Ratna's short stories are shaped to tell the tales of injustices and repression in Indonesian lives, more particularly in the lives of women. Ratna says fiction is a reflection of culture. The more women write from their own perspectives, especially in fiction, the more they are aware of their domestic and public roles, and this awareness will empower them to defend their rights against men's exploitation.[19]

The foremost depiction of female characters in Ratna's narratives is of marginalised and victimised Muslim women who largely dwell in rural areas, especially in Malang and its surrounding areas. According to her these women are forgotten or assumed to be unimportant, but they are typical of around seventy percent of Indonesian women.[20] It is therefore, she states, her privilege to bring them to life in her stories, narrating their pain and misery. Her narratives indeed project a variety of images of Indonesian Muslim women. Her refusal to portray urban and cosmopolitan women who are autonomous individuals, as in *sastra wangi* writings, breathes soul into the women who are not urban and who are still by and large victims of patriarchal domination. She reminds us that feminism still has a long way to go to finally reach its ideal of justice and equality for all women. In Ratna's opinion, tradition is the notion of women's domestication, whilst modernity situates them in public social arenas: tradition relates to women's dependence, modernity to independence. Ratna believes that Indonesian women want to be just like Cinderella; rescued from their problems by a Prince Charming who will defeat the wickedness of those around them and then marry them.

> If we talk about women in Indonesia, one of her feet is in the traditional sphere, the other in the modern, she herself is ambiguous [ambivalent]. (...) But in my opinion, women in Indone-

> sian society still largely hold male ideology. They still believe in the Cinderella complex.[21]

Paralleling the situation of Indonesian women with the Cinderella story is crucial as this strongly suggests that the ideal of Indonesian women is approximately similar to that held by women in the Western world. The Cinderella story is not of Indonesian origin, yet many Indonesian women identify themselves with her situation and want to have a happy ending just like Cinderella. Ratna uses such stereotypes in her narratives, and in doing so, aims to raise the awareness of her readers of how women are constructed in society, and of the ways women are able to empower themselves against such discrimination.

Claiming her writings to be a counter discourse to *sastra wangi*, which frequently use open sexual discourse, Ratna insists that there should be no such talk in women's writings, for it is the language of man that sees sex as open and vulgar. Women's language is more lyrical and refined, closer to affection, yet unemotional. Her opposition to *sastra wangi* is made clear when she says that it is erroneous to juxtapose sexual liberation and feminism. Sexual liberation (the most salient feature of *sastra wangi*) is a narrowly defined feminism. The danger of exposing sex and sexual activity openly lies in the presumption that it is what being feminine is about. For Ratna, femininity is God given, thus open exploration will reduce its beauty. She observes that vulgar sexual discourse is undeniably written in *bahasa laki-laki* (male language), as opposed to *bahasa perempuan* (female language).[22] This is the trap that she wants to avoid in her writings. Writing in female language and privileging female experiences is her essential proposal.

Ratna refuses to be labelled a feminist, but in her writings she puts 'the woman's question' into her attempt to critically read and attack the sexual division of labour because she believes the division is reflective of patriarchy and gender bias, not of the natural order. For Ratna, Islam personifies justice and equality as revealed in the *hadith* literature, but in most of the Muslim world, women are historically limited to domesticity and denied their public rights. Like other Muslim female authors, Ratna believes that it is not Islam that is oppressive to women, it is the culture, and Islam alone is protective of freedom and the rights of women. Documenting social history in her narratives challenges culturally biased notions of women's role.

Abidah El Khalieqy

If the previous two authors belong to older generations (*Angkatan 66* for Titis and *Angkatan 80an* for Ratna), Abidah El Khalieqy and Helvy

Tiana Rosa are of *Angkatan* 2000, as their narratives began to appear in the mid-1990s.[23] Both wearing *jilbab*, their claim to their religious identity is not only apparent in their narratives but, also in their authors' persona.

Abidah El Khalieqy is not only known as a prose writer but also as a poet. Indeed, she started her writing profession first in poetry, then moved on to prose writing. Abidah was born on March 1, 1965 in Menturo, Jombang and comes from a big *santri* family of seven children.[24] Growing up in Jombang, the capital of *pesantren*, she was exposed regularly to the Islamic discourses. Soon after she finished Islamic elementary school, she continued her study in a *pesantren putri* (*pesantren* for girls) of Persis (*Persatuan Islam*) in Bangil, East Java, for six years. Within this period she began to publish short stories and children's stories in newspapers and magazines under the pseudonyms Ida Arek Ronopati, Idasmara Prameswari or Ida Bani Kadir. Pursuing her secondary education in Jakarta and Klaten, Central Java, she then moved to Yogyakarta for her tertiary education. She graduated from IAIN (State Institute of Islamic Studies) *Sunan Kalijaga*. In Yogyakarta she was an active member of *Komunitas Teater Eska* (*Eska* Theatre Community) and *Lingkaran Penyair Yogyakarta* (Yogyakarta Poets Circle). She was invited to the APWLD forum in Kuala Lumpur (Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development) in relation to her book on the commodity of women's physical values from the perspective of Islamic law (a study on the advertising area). Abidah not only involves herself in writing, but also in the feminist movement: she is a supporter of both global and local feminist movements and belongs to *Kelompok Diskusi Perempuan International* (International Women Discussion Group).

Abidah is currently living in Megowo, Yogyakarta, with her three children and husband, Hamdy Salat, who is also a poet and prose writer. Like most women of her generation Abidah has a small family in comparison to older generations.[25] Abidah's writing achievement is notable. Her countless short stories, poems and essays have been published in several magazines such as *Horizon*, *Republika*, *Gadis*, *Amanah*, *Ulumul Qur'an* and many others. Her poems were included in *ASEANO: An Anthology of Southeast Asia Poems*, in 1995. In the same year she was invited to represent Indonesia at the ASEAN Writer's Conference/Work Shop on Poetry in Manila, Philippines. In 1997 she participated in *Bengkel Kerja Penulisan Kreatif Majelis Sastra Asia Tenggara* (MASTERA) in Jakarta, a writing workshop for ASEAN literary writers. The following year she was invited to read her poems at the secretariat of ASEAN, and received a literary award from the regional government of Yogyakarta. She was also invited to numerous poetry readings in several cities in Indonesia. Her publication, in addition to

some poetry anthologies, incorporates prose works like *Ibuku Lautan Berkobar* (My Mother the Burning Sea, 1997); *Menari di Atas Gunting* (Dancing Above the Scissors, 2001); *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (Woman with the *Sorban* Necklace, 2001); *Atas Singasana* (Above the Crown, 2003); and *Geni Jora* (Jora's Fire, 2004,) which won the second prize for the 2003 novel writing competition conducted by *Dewan Kesenian Jakarta* (The Jakarta Arts Council), and the most recent *Mahabbah Rindu* (The Longing for Love, 2007). Her poems about women and abortion were translated into English by Australian poet Geoff Fox and published in a cyber-album in 1998.

A recognised Indonesian literary critic, Budi Dharma, has compared Abidah's work to Taslima Nasreen's, the Bangladesh woman author whose works are mostly regarded as blasphemy to Islam. But far from Nasreen's radicalism, Abidah's presentation of Islamic gender ideology is subtle, yet voicing strong challenges to Islamic patriarchal interpretations.[26] Most of her works are weighted with women's issues located within Islamic perspectives, and she continuously criticises formal and informal institutions entrapping women in the shackles of their gender. The strongest theme in her narratives is her call for social change and female empowerment to occur with the sanction of Islamic doctrines. In *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban,* published under the auspices of YKF (*Yayasan Kesejahteraan Fatayat*, Fatayat Welfare Foundation) and the Ford Foundation, Abidah powerfully takes issues of women's right to education and reproduction into account. She says that her interest in feminism is based on her experience of what she sees and senses:

> If we see injustices how can we be silenced? (...) What is happening in our world? So, how can we be alert of all this? Perhaps, if I speak about those problems in my writings at least I have participated with my friends or those having concerns with problems of injustices and discrimination.[27]

Her narratives are laden with 'the woman's question', and she constantly creates and recreates her female characters as those who react and offer counter responses to patriarchal oppression.

Abidah's engagement with Islamic feminism started when she was an active member of *Yayasan Kesejahteraan Fatayat* (YKF), an NGO seeking to empower women. She posits:

> I try to keep myself informed about the advance of feminism either from the Western world or from the Islamic world such as the Middle East. (...) I am currently active in YKF, an NGO aiming for women's empowerment. This NGO is not affiliated

> with NU (*Nadhlatul Ulama*), although most members are also members of NU. With this NGO, we are redefining Qur'anic exegeses, researching how to create guidelines of *fiqh perempuan* [Islamic jurisprudence from women's perspectives] in *pesantren* similar to those done by Sinta Nuriyah with her *Forum Kajian Kitab Kuning*.[28]

Abidah believes that the best way to disseminate the notion of feminism, be it Islamic or any other, is through literary writings, since narratives are reflections of everyday lives that the readers can easily identify with and make meaning out of. Her narratives are her tools in reacting against injustices and discrimination against women, which in the end she hopes can inspire readers to create better conditions. The best way to vocalise her feminist views is through writings because she can use her own language, woman's language:

> The more I develop my knowledge and interest in feminism, the more I like discussing it as it is now actual and I think I have to start writing about it. I know some writers who have no concern about it. (...) Then, I can write in my own language, which means that I have full authority on *bahasa perempuan* (female language), utilising that female language which is not masculine. Masculine language colonises almost all spheres of both knowledge and literature. (...) Actually, what I feel [about the masculine hegemony of the language] does not come only from actual discourses that are in circulation, but also from my friends around me who feel the same way. Thus, I must begin entering that sphere [feminism].[29]

Similar to Ratna, Abidah argues that *bahasa perempuan* (female language) is not only crucial, but also accurate in presenting women's own experiences and views. It creates a strong identification that suggests a resistance to the essentialising agenda of identity politics created by the dominant male culture.[30] Of course, the problematic of female language is complicated when women project language assumed to be women's but is, instead, a projection of hegemonic male language. In this case, women write of men's perception rather than their own genuine perception. Nevertheless, through careful reading and scrutiny the problematic of female language can be identified and reassembled in order to provide entry into self and language. Abidah refers to Nawal El Saadawi's books, specifically *The Hidden Face of Eve,* which corresponds to the views she wants to articulate in her writings. The core of her narratives lies in the spirit of equality, though it may appear

in different shapes through different literary characterisation or different poetical expression.

Abidah's prose works are usually set in a *pesantren* background. The *pesantren* world is the world she knows well, and the language of *pesantren* is her mother tongue. She even calls herself '*santri* minded'. Her intention is to bring to life a *pesantren* world that has been largely ignored and marginalised by many writers. Only very few writers, such as Huda Huzairini and A.A. Navis, take note of the *pesantren* world. The *pesantren* world is normally regarded as an exclusive world, estranged, closed, very conventional and traditional. It is assumed to be a closed world because only those of *santri* backgrounds and families live there. Unless one wants to have an education in Islamic teachings, ordinary Indonesians do not usually live within a *pesantren* area. It can be said that the role of Abidah's writings is to bridge the *pesantren* and ordinary Indonesian world, linking the imaginings of the general Indonesian public to the factual life in the *pesantren* world. She is thus situated among these very few writers who explore the dynamics of *pesantren* life against the grain of the received view of the outside world. Her narratives are her readings of the personal experiences of those living there, though they are not necessarily hers. Abidah sets her latest work, *Geni Jora,* in Middle Eastern regions like Morocco, Damascus, Palestine, Lebanon and parts of Israel, for a similar reason. Because most contemporary Indonesian fiction is set in the Western world, Abidah chooses the Middle Eastern world as it was a centre of civilisation and the birth place of three great religions, making it very worthy of attention.

Her challenge to orthodox interpretations of women's role and position in Islamic society brings criticism from various *ulama*. Her novel, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban,* is an example. The first edition of this novel – about 3,000 copies were distributed free to NGOs, *pesantrens*, religious and social organisations, and *kyais* – was controversial when first published in 2001. Many in the invited audiences, which included *kyais,* showed their disagreement with her story which touched on women's rights to education, and the not to be spoken of issue of women's reproduction rights within Islamic tenets. Most significantly her criticism of *kitab kuning* was condemned. *Kitab kunings* in Abidah's perspective are conditional and should not be rated more importantly than the Qur'an. The fact that many of those living in *pesantren* make more primary use of these books than the Holy Book is her reason for criticising them. She notes further that what she criticises is the culture in which the world of the *pesantren* people reside; a culture which is in principle oppressive to women because it limits them solely to the domestic domain, and denies their rights to education and reproduction choice. For Abidah this is against the core of Islamic teachings. What

Abidah articulates in her narratives is crucial. She promotes balancing the sociological with the theological, a perspective that will provide the flexibility for Islamic doctrines to face various challenges presented by social changes, while reflecting the transcendental essence of Islamic spirit.

Helvy Tiana Rosa

Short story and essay writer and playwright Helvy's world is unknown to most Indonesian women. Her days are filled with activities other than as a housewife. Born in Medan, North Sumatra in April 2, 1970, Helvy moved to Jakarta in her teens, where she finished her secondary and tertiary education. She received her B.A. from *Universitas Indonesia* in Arabic literature. Recently, she was awarded her Master Degree in Indonesian literature from the same university. In her undergraduate years she founded a contemporary Muslim theatre (1991), and she directs her own plays. These include: *Aminah dan Palestina* (Aminah and Palestine, 1991); *Negeri Para Pesulap* (The Magicians' Country, 1993); *Maut di Kamp Loka* (Death at Loka Camp, 1993); *Fathiya dari Sebrenica* (Fathiya from Srebrenica, 1994); *Pertemuan Perempuan* (Women's Meeting, 1997, co-written with M. Syahida); and *Luka Bumi* (Earth's Wound, 1998, co-written with Rahmadianti). Between 1991-2001 she was Executive Director of *Annida*, an Islamic teenage magazine. In 1998 she participated in *Bengkel Cerpen Maestra* (*Majelis Sastra Asia Tenggara*, Southeast Asian Writing Workshop in Jakarta), and the following year she was invited to join *Bengkel Penulisan Cerita Anak* (Children's Stories Writing Workshop) conducted by *Pusat Perbukuan Depdikbud* (Centre of Books of the Ministry of Education and Culture). In 1999, as a delegate of *Horison* literary magazine, she also went to Johor Bahru, Malaysia, to attend *Pertemuan Sastra Nusantara* X (*Nusantara* Literary Meeting X). She has travelled extensively to cities in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, and Thailand where she discusses her works. Along with nine other women she was awarded Best Muslims by *Amanah*, a Muslim women's magazine. In 2002 she was invited to read her works at Al Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt. In 2003 she was invited to read and discuss her works at the Singapore Writer's Festival, shortly followed by a trip to the USA to present her works at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Michigan. She is now a member of the Executive Board and Literary Committee of the Jakarta Arts Council, and also a member of the scholar's board of *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS, Prosperous Justice Party, a growing Islamic political party in Indonesian politics). She is also the Chair of *Forum Lingkar Pena* (FLP, Pen Circle Forum), a literary organisation founded

in 1997 with a current membership of more than 5,000 spread around 120 cities in Indonesia and overseas. This organisation aims to support, guide and train its members to be writers. To date FLP through its own publishing house, *Lingkar Pena* Publishing House, has published at least 300 books written by its members.

Currently, Helvy lives in Jakarta, with her two children and her husband, Tomy Satryatomo, a television journalist. In her home she has established a public library called *Rumah Cahaya* (literally meaning 'light house', it is also an acronym for a house for *baca dan hasilkan karya*, reading and producing works). As with Titis and Abidah, compared to her parents, Helvy has a much smaller family. All three authors, to a certain degree, are products of the family planning programme, which affects women's empowerment (women's economic and social autonomy) within and outside the family, and this works in the case of Helvy, Abidah and Titis. Having more time for themselves, they create worlds both inside and outside their home, freely moving between the private and public spheres.

Helvy started writing at the age of ten and since then she has produced more than 200 short stories and numerous essays. Besides anthologies with other authors, her publications include: *Segenggam Gumam* (A Hand of Words, 2003); *Lelaki Kabut dan Boneka/ Dolls and The Man of Mist* (2002); *Wanita yang Mengalahkan Setan* (The Woman who Defeats Satan, 2002); *Titian Pelangi* (Path of Rainbow, 2000); *Hari-Hari Cinta Tiara* (Tiara's Days of Love, 2000); *Akira* (Akira, 2000); *Pangeranku* (My Prince, 2000); *Manusia-Manusia Langit*, (The Sky Humans, 2000); *Sebab Sastra yang Merenggutku dari Pasrah* (Because Literature Snatches Me from Submission, 1999); *Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi* (When Mas Gagah Leaves, 1997); *McAlliester* (a novel translated into English and published in London by Moslem Press, 1996); *Pelangi Nurani* (Rainbow of Conscience, 2002); *Nyanyian Perjalanan* (Songs of Journey, 1999); *Hingga Batu Bicara* (Until the Rocks Speak, 1999); and *Lentera* (The Lantern, 1999). Her works have been translated into many languages, including English, Arabic, Japanese and German, and some have been transferred into comic book form. Her short story *Jaring-Jaring Merah* (The Red Nets), along with nine other short stories was included in the best stories for the ten-year period 1990-2000 by *Horison* literary magazine.

Many writers feel a sense of social responsibility in advising their readers on problematic social issues. Within this perspective, books become a vehicle for the social concerns of the writers. Helvy undeniably voices her concerns about social issues in her stories. Although her work is limited to short stories (Helvy reasons she does not breathe long enough to produce a novel) they reflect two important thematic lines: her love of God, and the struggles of the oppressed. She sets her

narratives within the domain of Islamic literature because she believes it is indeed accommodative to such themes:

> Literature is not something dreadful, difficult and the like. For me, Islamic literature is defined as unlimited literature in which all writings are accommodated to the belief in God. It's very simple. But such definitions should not limit us in our writings. Islamic literature is indeed liberating: it is how we can call for goodness implicitly and explicitly within the framework of aesthetics. (...) Islam is universal and *rahmat bagi sekalian alam* (*rahmatil lil 'alamin*, a blessing for the whole universe) and the concept I am following is that writing should enlighten its readers or *minadz dzulilmat ila annuur* (out of darkness to enlightenment).[31]

Helvy's mission is to 'enlighten' her readers and she hopes that after reading her works they will understand her messages. She wants her writing to function as a source of knowledge, or at least to inform and clarify something that was previously unknown or 'obscure'. Her writings must convey purpose without abandoning aesthetic aspects. She strongly believes that ideal interpretations of Islam are meant to be enlightening because the coming of Islam is believed to have ended the age of *jahiliyya* (ignorance, commonly associated with darkness). Islam and aesthetics are thus two entwined themes embodied in her narratives. Aesthetics is the medium through which 'truth' is presented. Her narratives are not limited to only serving Islamic ideals, but also universal ideals, because Islamic values carry universality in their practices.

The significance of Islam reverberates in Helvy' stories, because she believes that Islamic ideals build justice and equality, so do her narratives. Nevertheless, saying that she wants to bring a social change is too idealistic. Her missionary ideal is that through her writings, at least one individual is enlightened, meaning that after reading her works a reader will endeavour to have a better condition, or at least desire a better state. The maxim of her writings is implied on her website – www.helvytianarosa.com[32]– where she writes that she wants to reach a better state with every breath she takes, in every communication she makes, in every work she produces; for writing is the channel communicating her ideas.[33]

Sebab Sastra yang Merenggutku dari Pasrah (Because Literature Snatches Me Away from Submission) is the title of her collection of short stories that explicitly articulates the author's real purpose for her writings. She states:

> Because literature snatches me away from being submissive. When information about the Islamic world is distorted in various media, when global conspiracy strikes, when Muslims and I suddenly are in the state of 'helplessness', I don't want to surrender. I struggle through literature [my writings].[34]

Helvy claims that her narratives are her way to act in response against any injustice and discrimination experienced by oppressed men and women; she illustrates this with the struggles of the Palestinian people against Israel's occupation. She argues that the media, especially the Western media, often depict the Palestinian freedom fighters *Hammas* as terrorists while Israel, the colonial, is never given such a label.[35] As a result she explores many war stories in conflict areas where Muslims are repressed victims, such as in Palestine, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, and some regions in Indonesia such as Aceh and Poso. Helvy's short stories are fictional, but her pen is a powerful means to react against these injustices. In writing her war stories she always undertakes research in order to provide vivid illustrations and accurate local colour.[36] She creates what is often termed 'resistance literature'. Her portrayal of those resisting any kind of discrimination, oppression or domination is her way of communicating the injustices that these Muslim communities have suffered. Through her writings she creates a counter discourse against distorted information. In so doing, she seeks different endings than those of the distorted portrayals, as her endings are 'already implicit, contained within the narrative analysis and construction of the conditions and the problematic of the historical situation itself.'[37] Helvy offers different insights and analyses of the circumstances of repression and domination by erecting symbolic foundations of her own. Her foundation is irrefutably her single most important consideration: the construction of Islam as a liberating agent, which is powerfully embraced by her and her fictional characters.

The representation of the Islamic world that Helvy illustrates in her stories is never meant to be monolithic. In an interview she states that a Muslim woman is not solely represented by one wearing a *jilbab*, for a veiled woman is one of the plural faces of Islam, especially in Indonesia.[38] She believes it is capitalist law that always homogenises all representations. Although all her book covers are illustrated with veiled women, she argues that it is the desire of the publishers to always render *muslimah* as women with veils in order to commodify representations for the benefit of profit taking. Similar reasoning is applied as she comments on some bookstores' placement of her books under the category of NORI (*Novel Remaja Islami*, Islamic Teenage Novels). She says that the readership of her stories is not intended to be only teen-

agers, although most of her stories objectify teenage characters and lives. Her works, she insists, are not 'teen lit' (*sastra remaja*), a genre similar to 'chick lit', but targeted at teenage readers whereas she does not target a specific audience.[39] The term Muslim is not exclusive to adults, but is neutral regardless of one's age, class, culture or other category except in indicating one's religion. Narratives of the politics of religious identity mostly depict the lives of adult Muslims, hardly ever are they about Muslim teenagers. But Helvy argues that teenagers too experience a complicated and dynamic religious identification process, perhaps more vibrant because teenagers are in the process of becoming adults. In portraying the life of teenage Muslims in her writings, Helvy certainly enriches the variety of contemporary Indonesian literature.

Indeed, Helvy draws Muslims from various standpoints. However, her most depicted character is a female character facing problems in sustaining her religious identity, particularly in war conflict areas. Her war stories are narratives of women of resistance, and she relocates them from the context of their real historic struggles to fiction. In so doing, she exhibits aspects of their lives linked to the affairs of the world that are influential to their struggles. Reasoning why women are her tools, she says:

> I want me to be in my works, that is why my protagonists are usually females. Moreover, it is time to depict females proportionally in literary writings. It means that if literary writings about war have female figures, history too will record many women as heroes. Actually, I am not a feminist, I just want women to be valued and have important roles. Also, there is awareness in my writings that my protagonists are empowered women. Intentionally, I do want women to be my protagonists.[40]

Despite her attempt to display empowered female figures in her narratives, she refuses to be called a feminist. Her presence in her works signifies her role as an actor in promoting Islamic ideals. Women's empowerment in her fiction even goes to a higher level as it transgresses the male domain. The story of female *jihad* is a vivid example of this. The notion of *jihad* in Helvy's writing holds various meanings – from an actual participation in war, to a more-subtle emotional struggle such as maintaining one's religious identity. She believes any struggle against any injustice, subjugation and domination is the very notion of *jihad* itself. Within such a perspective her role as an author telling the narratives of struggle is her own *jihad*.

The portrayal of women's *jihad* is an impulse toward a new reading of *jihad*. *Jihad* is commonly regarded as men's action in the public sphere. In Helvy's narratives women, including young girls, neverthe-

less undertake this so-called men's action. In doing so, these women and girls destabilise and challenge the prevailing tradition. Helvy presents her heroines as active individuals whose responses undermine the received ideal of 'true women' as weak, meek and emotionally ruled. But more directly, she unmasks the ideology that women belong in domestic roles, by presenting women fully participating in social and public affairs. This also shows her belief in the strong bonds of the Muslim community (*ukhuwah islamiyah*, Muslim unity). For that reason she creates a world supportive of Muslim women's struggles, a world of strong Muslim relationships that demystify the conventions of sentimental fiction with which women's stories are often identified. Helvy's war stories blatantly expose the casualties, terror and violence of war. Her works are a celebration of self-empowerment, and the assertion of an alternative moral vision that challenges the simplistic notions of morality associated with true womanhood, such as female passivity and physical weakness. For these reasons, through her narratives, Helvy might be calling for a new definition of female morality grounded in the heroines' experiences in maintaining their religious conviction. Such a notion of morality would not be founded solely upon woman's physical and biological make-up, but on more complicated contextual grounds. Thus Helvy uses her narratives to free women from the confinement of the private sphere, and to rewrite the history of ideas about women's morality.

The four selected writers show their own characteristics. However, they seem to share similarities. With the exception of Ratna who remains unmarried, they all differentiate themselves from their parents' family size by having fewer children. They also write from an exclusively female perspective, often using a first person narrator. Most importantly, in their attempts to raise women's issues in their writings in relation to the idea of women, gender and Indonesian settings, they believe that Islam is grounded in justice and equality. The message of Islam disseminated by the Prophet Muhammad is in itself ideal, yet its practices across regions and cultures may move to totally different directions than those intended by the Prophet. Islam, these writers argue, is not oppressive, not to women, not to anybody. It is its practices, often mixed with local cultures, customs and social structures, housed under the name of orthodox interpretations, which are oppressive and discriminative to women, privileging one sex over the other. These four writers walk the same path spreading the message of the justice and equality of Islam, although it is manifested in different ways: Titis through the framework of Sufism, Ratna through her blatant attacks on masculine oppression of women, especially lower-class women, Abidah through her challenges to orthodox interpretations, especially those living in the *pesantren* world, and Helvy through her women's *ji-*

had against oppression and injustices. These writers create possible responses of how women can react to oppressive circumstances. Such reactions may be well read as their attempts to construct and develop women's own agencies from many available and possible ways. Their different methods are worthy of merit, as such differences underline women's diverse circumstances. Women are not at all monolithic, women are not of a single identification; they are fractured and fragmented and divided in various lines of class, social structures, cultures, political and economic settings, producing various subject-positions and self-constructions. In their varieties of narratives these writers contribute new Islamic-based interpretations of gender-relations and the politics of gender.

5 Representation, Identity and Religion: Images of Muslim Women, Their Lives and Struggles in Fiction (Part I)

Women writers now occupy a prominent position in the modern Indonesian literary canon. With the growing popularity of both serious and popular literary works, a younger generation of authors such as Ayu Utami, Dewi Lestari, Fira Basuki and Jenar Mahesa Ayu now enjoy a much larger readership. Women authors write narratives engaged with issues of women's identity whether it be social, cultural or religious (as exemplified by Titis, Ratna, Abidah and Helvy, discussed in the preceding chapter), yet the issue of religious convictions seldom surfaces within the domain of literary criticism. Most literary criticism analysis of the canon of Indonesian literature overlooks aspects of religious convictions; for example, *Membaca dan Membaca Lagi Reintepretasi Fiksi Indonesia 1980-1985* (Reading and Reading Again: Reinterpretation of Indonesian Fictions 1980-1985, 2004) by Pamela Allen, emphasises the works of 3 prominent writers: Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Y.B. Mangunwijaya and Putu Wijaya read from the perspectives of social realism, neo-regionalism, anti-intellectualism, post-modernism or post-colonialism. *In the Shadow of Change: Images of Women in Indonesian Literature* (1994) by Tineke Hellwig, focuses on images of women and gender-related issues and not on religious identity. *Kritik Sastra Feminis Teori dan Aplikasinya* (Feminist Literary Critics and its Application, 2002) by Sugihastuti Suharto, is an exclusive reading of the portrayal of women in some Indonesian fictions through the construction of the gender hierarchy socially and culturally. *Sastra Indonesia dalam Enam Pertanyaan: Esai-esai Sastra dan Budaya* (2004) by Ignas Kleden also overlooks the politics of religious identification. The more recent book entitled *Sastra, Perempuan, Seks* (2006) by Katrin Bandel noticeably discussing the writings of *sastra wangi* slightly touches on religious identity when she examines religiosity in the novels of three Indonesian women writers: Dewi Lestari, Clara Ng and Ani Sekarningsih.[1] Bandel focuses only on the existence of religiosity and not religious identity – Bandel differentiates religiosity and religion – in the works of those three writers.

Notwithstanding the numerous works which have been produced by Indonesian Muslim authors, Islamic convictions apparently receive little standing in the study of modern Indonesian literature. The politics

of religious identity are hardly ever explored and examined, though such politics frequently appear in numerous writings. The limitation is not exclusive to Islam. This, perhaps, results from the restrictions applied during the Soeharto regime, when discussions about differences in SARA (*suku, agama, ras, antar-golongan*, ethnics, religion, race, group and class) were banned. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s Soeharto viewed Islam, in particular, as a set of political principles around which its followers might mobilise and organise which would jeopardise his authoritative control. Writings on religion came with strict limitations and under surveillance. The prohibition proved to be effective; discussion was silenced and religious identities became invisible in public discourse. The required religious education at all levels of public schooling under the New Order has made a deep impact, making Indonesians more monolithic than they were before.

Despite the restrictions some Indonesians managed to raise issues of religious identity in the public arena. In 1970, Nurcholis Madjid (1939-2005), one of Indonesia's most notable Muslim intellectuals, proclaimed in his now famous speech *Islam Yes Partai Islam No* (Islam Yes, Islamic Political Party No), that the spirit of democracy should be based on the spirit of nationalism and not faith (religion), thus Muslims should not vote merely for Islamic political parties, but were free to vote for non Islamic political parties.[2] This was a controversial speech. On the one hand, there was support for Madjid from those who thought his speech was a vehicle to create room for Muslim intellectuals, but, on the other, he was seen to be accepting the state ideology, *Pancasila,* (five basic principles) as Islamic. Some opponents accused him of being a supporter of Soeharto. In the 1980s, while undertaking his doctorate degree in the United States, Madjid was again controversial, arguing that Islamic teachings were not in support of an Islamic state *par excellence*. The polemics of his argument were triggered by an article by Amin Rais in *Panji Masyarakat* magazine entitled, *Tidak Ada Negara Islam* (There is No Islamic State), which was based on Madjid's correspondence with Muhammad Roem, a prominent politician and statesman.[3] When he returned from the United States in 1984, Madjid proposed his seminal concept of *masyarakat madani* (a civilised society based on tolerance, pluralism and democracy). This gained him more supporters and placed him amongst *bapak bangsa* (the nation's fathers).[4] Today, Madjid's ideas are still controversial. Moderate and liberal, educated Muslims support and spread his ideas, specifically through his Paramadina Foundation; the more scriptural and revivalist, such as members of DDII (Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia – Indonesian Islamic Preaching Council) still consider him to be an apostate of Islam.[5]

If Madjid's case is an example of Soeharto's restriction of SARA, the literary domain suffered similar repression. Issues of religious identity are indeed problematic. Many writers run the risk of being labelled an apostate (as was Madjid), or being called blasphemous. Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988), the works of Nawal El Saadawi (b. 1931) and Taslima Nasreen (b. 1962) are amongst the examples. In the history of Indonesian literature the publication in *Sastra* (literature) magazine in 1968 of *Langit Makin Mendung* (The Sky Becomes Clouded), a short story by Kipanjikusmin (a pseudonym), is an example of the challenges that authors face when they write about religion. The story involves Muhammad the Prophet who was at that time dwelling in Heaven, along with other 'retired' prophets. Knowing that too few Muslims came to Heaven, Muhammad and the other prophets petitioned God to be sent to the world to conduct a small research. Muhammad's request was granted, and he and the archangel Jibril (Gabriel) impersonated eagles and landed in Jakarta. The story continues with a description of the gruesome, chaotic and restless conditions in Jakarta prior to the 1965 communist coup. The conditions upset the Prophet, especially after he found out that the majority of Indonesians were Muslims. The controversy around the story lies in the personifications and appearances of God and the Prophet Muhammad. According to the *Kejaksaan Tinggi Sumatera Utara* (Attorney General of North Sumatera) this was heresy and destructive of Islamic moral values.[6] The magazine was banned, and H.B. Jassin the Chief Editor was sentenced to a year's imprisonment, even though he argued that the story was never intended to personify God and his messenger, it only aimed to picture an idea of God and the prophet, and to show how the prophet would react in seeing our vices, and this certainly was not an insult to Islam. Jassin appealed to the High Court, but a final decision had not been reached at the time of his death in 2000. Until today the identity of Kipandjikusmin remains a mystery, although he did write an apology for his story in 1968:

> Actually I never meant at all to insult Islam. My real goal is very personal as I aim to communicate with God, the Prophet Muhammad, paradise and so forth alongside laughing at the stupidity of Soekarno's regime. But indeed I have failed; using a short story to deliver my criticism was wrong. Consequently, Muslims responded to it as an offence to Islam.[7]

The sensitivity of religious issues, along with government restriction, stopped many authors bringing them into public discourse through their writings. However, the fall of the Soeharto regime in 1998 has opened an opportunity to bring the politics of religious identity into In-

donesian public discourse. At the present time considerable freedom is enjoyed for the discussion of religious identity; however, such freedom is not limitless. The recent banning by the Minister of Religious Affairs of discussions about the reformed counter legal draft compilations of the Islamic Law/Family Code (discussed later in more detail) is a good example. The draft was deemed to be controversial and capable of causing social instability. Further, the recent issuing of *fatwas* (religious statements) stating, among other things, that religious pluralism and liberal Islam are *haram* (forbidden), is yet another example. The *fatwas* themselves are controversial; many are against them, while some, particularly the scriptural and revivalists, are strongly supportive. However, never in Indonesia have *fatwas* been subjected to such strong public debate: something unimaginable during Soeharto's rule. The wide circulation of the debates over the *fatwas* in the public arena does show that the Indonesian public today has more room to channel their opinion compared to past years, although this 'room' is still restricted, evidenced by the attacks from Islamic groups such as FPI (*Front Pembela Islam*, Islamic Defender Front) to the headquarters of JIL (*Jaringan Islam Liberal*, Liberal Islam Network) in mid-2005.

In Teeuw's opinion, Hamka (1908-1981) is the champion of Muslim writing because his works, in principle, embody the representation of Islam through literature. In the history of early Indonesian literature there are other Muslim writers, for example, Nur St. Iskandar, Tulis St. Sati, Abdul Muis, Bahrum Rangkuti, but they receive less stature because, according to Teeuw, unlike Hamka their narratives '[cannot] be called typically Moslem (literature).'[8] However, Teeuw does not further specify what 'typically Moslem literature' is, so his inclusion of only Hamka and not the others seems to be very narrow. In-depth scrutiny of early Indonesian narratives shows that often authors portrayed the struggles that people had in keeping with their Islamic values; that is, the struggle to maintain their religious identity within changing social conditions.[9]

Atheis (Atheist, 1949) by Achdiat K. Mihardja (discussed in Chapter Five) is not only a story of gender relations within Islamic tenets, but can also be read as the struggle of maintaining, or reconstructing, one's Islamic identity. Achdiat's story is based on Hasan's (fictional) manuscript of his autobiographical testimony in which he relates his theological fluctuation from being a believer of Islam to an atheist, and finally to a believer. Hasan is unable to maintain his conviction; he drifts back and forth between his faith and his friends' Marxist/Leninist materialism. In the end he suffers a tragic death at the hands of the Japanese military. Nevertheless, before he dies Hasan returns to his faith by saying 'God is great'.[10] When Achdiat's novel was published in 1949 it was amongst the first in the genre of 'testimonial writing'. It

was also the first writing dealing with in-depth psychological conflicts and inner theological struggles. The novel brilliantly captures the new nation caught in the conflicts of changing worlds: between the feudalism of Javanese society and the modern proletarian community of young people; between religious conservatism with its weight on spiritual devotion and the emerging materialism; and between superstitions associated with the village world and the rationality of urban life. Hasan does not live only in Achdiat's imaginary world, or in the past, he personifies the way many Indonesian Muslims today rationalise their religious identity and cope with the dynamics of Indonesian society.

A younger generation of authors, such as Mochtar Lubis (1922-2004), Ali Akbar Navis (1924-2003) and Kuntowidjojo (1943-2005), have portrayed the dynamics of religious identity in their narratives. Navis' short story, *Robohnya Surau* Kami (The Decline and Fall of Our Local Mosque), for example, involves Muslims' attempt to rationalise their religion. The dual responsibilities of being a good Muslim are well presented through the conflicting characters of *Kakek* (grandfather), whose life is devoted to serving God, and Ajo Sidi, whose life is devoted to worldly duties. Navis' narrative skilfully captures the reality of the historical moment of the text. Navis satirically criticises the common misconception of Islamic belief that it should be concerned solely with the spiritual realm and not the worldly one. For Navis, Islam works both ways; it is the language providing the harmonious relation between humans and their Creator, and amongst humans themselves.[11] The anecdote in the story where the personified God speaks to Haji Saleh (a character similar to *kakek*), clearly illustrates the author's points. When Haji Saleh asked God whether it was wrong for him to worship his Creator, God himself answered:

> No. You did wrong in spending too much time on the cultivation of your soul. You prayed because you were afraid of going to Hell, but you forgot your fellow Muslims and your family. You were put in the world to live as part of a community, but you were too selfish.[12]

Kakek commits suicide as soon as he learns the story of Haji Saleh and God's message; this represents the conflicts Indonesian Muslim communities were experiencing when the story was written in 1957. Even so, as old as the story is, the conflicts Navis depicts still capture the present day reality of Indonesian Muslims who need to negotiate and balance the spiritual and material worlds.

Religious issues do not only attract prose authors to capture them in imaginative worlds. Poets like Taufik Ismail (b. 1935), Emha Ainun Najid (b. 1953), Mustafa Bisri (b. 1944), Abdul Hadi MW (b. 1946), Su-

tardji Calzoum Bachri (b. 1941) and others, have also enriched the dynamics of the politics of religious identities in Indonesian contexts. These poets are renowned for focusing their literary merits on exploring issues in Islamic tenets, ranging from theological convictions to social criticism. Mustafa Bisri, often called Gus Mus, for example, is a *kyai,* calligrapher, painter and a prose-writer and believes that Muslims will naturally produce works that are reflections of Islamic values.[13] According to Gus Mus literary labelling such as Islamic or Sufistic has no meaning if the works and their producers are not Islamic in nature; the creator of the art is most important.[14] Arahmaini, a modern art artist, maintains that the role of Islam is extremely vital in building attitudes, values and even culture itself, and art can function as a medium to channel subjects which cannot be spoken about in other mediums. She believes that Islam is a liberating theology providing room for Muslims to perceive it critically.[15]

In looking at Islamic art in Indonesia, Kenneth George shares the view of Gus Mus and Arahmaini. George argues that Islam and state are essential in shaping Indonesian cultural life. And this is seen with government-sponsored projects such as the Al-Qur'an Mushaf Istiqlal from 1991 to 1995, and state-sponsored festivals such as Festival Istiqlal I in 1991 and II in 1995[16]. However, with President Soeharto opening and closing the festivals the state legitimised its role as the sole authoritative figure in shaping public culture. George wrote before the fall of Soeharto when the state still had repressive control over public culture, though, even then, artists and the *umma* in general still attempted to find room for constructing their own religious identity. As noted earlier, there is now greater freedom in public discourses and Islam is not the only discourse on the politics of identity; discursive notions of nation and nationalism (as suggested by George) also function as essential contributing factors. The interests and agendas of various social, political and cultural actors within the society play a significant role in shaping the life of public culture. Indeed, within such perspectives, Islam is not simply a religious ritual; the spirit of Islamic values can be reflected in all aspects of life, art and cultural expressions.

Contemporary Indonesia is now abundant with literary works and art, be it poetry, prose production, fine art, or popular production, which deal with the subjectivity and politics of religious identity, in particular of Islamic identities. In major bookstores such as *Toko Buku Gramedia* (*Gramedia* bookstore), there are sections specifically for the display of NORI.[17] Separate sections for Islamic books are not uncommon in most bookstores.

Most of them, Hooker observes, are *panduan* literature, guide writings mostly 'directed to women, [which] set out the ideal duty and conduct expected from and required of proper devout Muslim women.'[18]

Such books, most of them printed in paperback form, are translations of Arabic sources or original stories by Indonesian authors. The growth of Islamic writings has also impinged on children's literature. *Aku Anak Soleh* magazine (I am a Devout Child, published by Mizan Anak) provides both instructions on how to be a devout Muslim child and stories (mostly in comic book form) of a proper Muslim way of life. The stories are usually taken from everyday experiences, but popularised stories from the Qur'an are also available. Islamic popular magazines such as *Ummi* and *Amanah* (for adult females) and *Annida* (for teenage females), and tabloid newspapers such as *Nurani* for female readers are easily accessible. Islamic popular songs, better known as *nasyid* have scores of audiences as well. *Nasyid* ranges from modern popular bands such as Smada and Hadad Alwi, to traditional gamelan groups, like *Kyai Kanjeng*.

Thus the life of present day Indonesian Islam is no longer defined solely through the spiritual life; it has penetrated to areas previously defined as 'secular'. During the fasting month of *Ramadhan*, Indonesian television channels are crammed with Islamic programmes: from sermons and quiz shows to soap operas known as *sinetron Ramadhan*.[19] Such *sinetron* are not that different to other *sinetron,* but the female actresses wear a *jilbab* and the stories occur during *Ramadhan*. Nonetheless, despite the vast availability of Islamic productions in guidebooks, magazines, fiction and popular works, works on the politics of Islamic identity within Indonesian settings are still limited. Discussion on the resurgence of Islamic elements in all art production forms is largely conducted on academic campuses and within NGO organisations. This also applies to issues concerning women and Islam and their conditioning within Indonesian contexts as portrayed in fiction writing. The following discussion of the works of four major Muslim Indonesian female writers aims to fill in some of the blanks. The narratives of Titis Basino, Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim, Abidah El Khalieqy and Helvy Tiana Rosa are posited to be rich sources for revealing the construction of Indonesian Muslim women's identities.

Women and Their Married Lives in the Works of Titis Basino P.I.

Titis is a very prolific author. During the span of her writing career, she has published at least 15 novels with a first edition publication of 1,000 copies[20], yet despite her productivity, she is less well known than the other writers. Perhaps the major issues in her narratives are the ones less favoured by the respondents, as she mostly depicts women and their marriage problems, and the majority of the respondents are young. Nevertheless, marriage is one of many areas where women in

Indonesia are believed to have unequal status and Titis' narratives reveal the roles women play in their married lives and which conflicts such roles produce. Most of Titis' novels come in a series of two or more on a particular theme. The stories selected are analysed through a feminist reading of the identity politics of the main characters who are the voices channelling women's aspirations and desires.

Spiritual Love

Dari Lembah ke Coolibah (From the Valley to Coolibah, 1997), *Welas Asih Merengkuh Tajali* (Love and Compassion Have Reached Self-Disclosure, 1997) and *Mensucikan Perselingkuhan* (To Purify Affairs, 1998) have a single theme: recounting the life of a middle-aged widow named Noor. The story unravels Noor's struggles in order to make sense and meaning of her middle-age. After the death of her husband, Noor travels to Mecca (*haj*) where she meets a young *uztad* (Islamic teacher) named Ahmad and they develop a relationship, even though Ahmad is married with two children. Their relationship is purely emotional. Unexpectedly, while working in Mecca as a counsellor for those performing *haj,* Ahmad goes missing and is presumed dead. Noor returns from the *haj* and starts a hotel business with the money and land she inherited from her husband; the hotel is very successful. Believing Ahmad to be dead his wife decides to remarry. Ahmad, after having had plastic surgery, appears a year later as Hamid. Ahmad tells Noor that his disappearance and plastic surgery are for security reasons and he is determined not to tell his family about it for their own protection. Ahmad simply tells Noor that he is wanted by a group of criminals for destroying their operation. Knowing this, and not wanting to ruin his wife's new family, Hamid proposes to Noor and they are married. New face, new identity and new name are his choices to save him and his family. Despite later meeting his father and brother Ahmad remains Hamid, and only on his death (seven years after his marriage to Noor) does Noor reveal his identity to his family, including Hamid's ex-wife.

Taufiq Ismail writes that this story is an interesting observation of the roles of faith in upper-class society.[21] Indeed, not only does it talk about faith, but also the surrounding issue of how a Muslim woman establishes her identity in new settings: as a successful business woman, as a wife and as a member of the social elite. Noor's story is reminiscent of the conjugal relationship between Khadijah and Muhammad. Similar to Khadijah, Noor is 14 years Ahmad's senior; when they marry she is 60, Ahmad 46. The striking similarities between Khadijah and Noor also refer to their respectable position in society, their wealth and their business skills. For Noor, Hamid is not only a hus-

band, he is also her spiritual guide for her faith. Noor itself means light while Ahmad is commonly the shorter name for Muhammad. Metaphorically, Ahmad for Noor is her means to her spiritual search for divine love. As allegorical light, Noor reflects her desires to reach God, and in God alone that she will surrender her faith and life. Accordingly, love that develops between Noor and Ahmad is not about lust, rather it is the spiritual love or *mahabba* that Allah is the sole owner of: 'this jar of love left here belonged only to God.'[22]

The story of Noor and Hamid exemplifies the complexity of feminism and masculine domination. Despite being very self-empowered and having social and economic achievement, and as a feminist who puts forward women's emancipation and equality, Noor cannot radically escape from her feminine status; that she is still a woman, a wife, whose primary domain is the domestic. In Hamid's eyes, she is destined to be with man as his company, and to be his servant. However, Noor does not easily accept this position. She rejects his opinion and says: 'Togetherness or oppression. It is no longer the time when women have to follow all men's wills. Yet, from the time she wakes up to going to bed, man is still on top, *dasar nasib* (what a destiny).'[23] This is an example of the problematical gender relations for Indonesian Muslims. Noor knows her feminine nature, thereby knowing her gender roles and status, and is willing to commit to them, but at the same time she is very critical. For Noor, the companionship between man and woman runs the risk of turning into oppression, especially when the discourse of destiny (*kodrat*) takes control. Noor has indeed strong awareness of the ideological conception of *kodrat*, which determines the fate of Indonesian women, yet her struggles are clear when she comments on women's positions:

> Although having a wife, if he finds a different woman, a man will love to be with that woman. Although she was his ideal, he would still find another. Who asked the wife to stay elegant? Who asked the wife to be submissive in sexual intercourse? Who? All were the husband's demands. But, if he found a beautiful, smart or stupid and chic woman, he would go and get her.[24]

Noor is critical of the politics of women's positioning and her endeavours in her life fight against such positioning. She manages her own affairs, refusing Ahmad's money to pay for her needs. As a successful businesswoman she has no difficulty in keeping her own accounts. Nevertheless, what she does is quite challenging for she refuses to devote her life solely to Hamid, dividing equally her time to business, domestic duties, accompanying her husband when travelling overseas

and humanitarian activities. She supersedes Hamid in a number of ways including in her physical appearance and achievements. If Hamid has to fight strongly against old age, Noor seems not to age, staying beautiful, as if age cannot touch her. Therefore, Hamid's death is predictable, leaving Noor to find her own way to locate her position in the higher spiritual search.

Welas Asih Merengkuh Tajali (1997), the title of the second book in the series, seems to justify Noor's spiritual journey, emphasising women's equal roles in spiritual arenas. *Tajali* is derived from the Arabic *tajalli* meaning self-disclosure. This term, according to Murata, is commonly employed by cosmologists to explicate the relationship between the universe and God.[25] Within this gnostic experience, woman is the perfect way of coming to God through love: love that is directed only to God. Titis summarises Noor's experience by saying that in learning God's holiness one needs to be small, to be materially non-existent, to be nothing, just light, and when one becomes the one who knows, one will be strong and resilient, and in approaching God, one will lose all material existence. Accordingly, Noor needs to disclose herself in order to fulfil her desire of gnostic attainment, admitting her longing to be with Him, sacrificing all her worldly life so that His lights and love can penetrate into and forever inhabit her soul.[26] Noor says: 'welas asih telah merengkuh tajali' (love and compassion have reached self-disclosure);[27] Noor realises that spiritual love is only in existence through love and compassion, and that her self-disclosure to love (God's love) enables her to witness God's self-disclosure (*tajalli*). 'He who knows himself knows his Lord'[28], or rather for Noor, she who knows herself knows her Lord. In the end, Noor becomes she who knows and experiences God's love in the highest and most spiritual way.

Marriage: Perfect Sexual and Souls Union

Marriage in Titis' views sums up the whole purpose of the creation of man and woman. The sexual act between man and woman taking place within the bonds of legal marriage is perceived not as human being's satisfaction of sexual desires, rather it is seen as an act in which 'the human being is overwhelmed by the power of pleasure, thereby gaining a foretaste of the bliss of the paradisaical relationship with God.'[29] Murata believes that the core of sexual conduct lies in the philosophical ideal which Ibn al-'Arabi calls 'the greatest self-disclosure'. Marriage is then fundamental as it not only channels the very nature of human *syahwat* (Indonesian, meaning sexual desires, from the Arabic *shahwa*, meaning appetite), but it also symbolises a perfect act of religious submission. Marriage is then not merely a locus of obe-

dient corporeal bodies – the realities of masculinity and femininity – it is taken to a higher degree of the union of souls; the union of *nafs* (the source of creation).

The significance of the soul over the body is reflected in most of Titis' works. The death of Hamid does not stop Noor's longing for their next meeting in the after-life for their souls will reunite in the after-life. This corresponds to the conception of *jodoh* (soul mate); a belief that the majority of Indonesians still hold. It is similar to the idea of a 'marriage made in heaven', a destiny over which human beings have no control.

Jodoh is not necessarily meant for relationships between man and woman, it has also extended to imply something which is meant to be the only one. In *Di Bumi Aku Bersua di Langit Aku Bertemu* this concept strongly emerges. The story tells about the lives of two sisters, Yulia and Tiara, who have contrasting dispositions and physical appearances. Yulia devotes her life to her husband and children; Tiara chooses to be a successful career woman. Yulia simply accepts her arranged marriage, Tiara independently finds a husband of her own choice. Yulia is very attractive, Tiara less so. Yulia happily devotes her life to her family (her husband, two children and her mother), whereas Tiara lives alone (her husband is dead) and is devoted to her work. A few years younger than Yulia, Tiara is ill but has not revealed her illness to her family; she dies before she reaches thirty. Yulia recalls the moment when death approached her sister:

> Tiara knew she surely would die and never asked to get better, only praised the greatness of God. God is great. Yes, those words she said, not that I asked for healing. She was really at ease and ready. How strong was this sister of mine, until her last minute she still taught me to be brave, content and courageous. I would not forget that moment when her face was shining as if she was seeing a beautiful thing there, in the sky. Was it paradise? I just heard her words that on earth we meet and in paradise we would encounter.[30]

Death for Tiara is not something to avoid and she has been preparing herself for when death comes. Tiara welcomes death wholeheartedly for it enables her to be reunited with her husband, for their two souls to be reunited. In terms of husband and wife relations, the Javanese conception of *garwa* also embodies the understanding of the eternal relationship of soul mates. In this belief a husband is a *garwa* for his wife and a wife for a husband. *Garwa* means *sigaring nyawa*, half of the soul. When one dies, and as long as the other does not marry again, their souls will reunite in the hereafter, similar to the conception of *jo-*

doh. As submission to God's will becomes the core of Islamic doctrines, Tiara's submissive act to her life and death and her *jodoh* is sufficiently justified. Such submission reaches its peak when Tiara shows her ability to be a perfect servant of God's will, without challenging it.

Titis' portrayal of Muslim's obligation of servanthood, which is central to Islam, reflects what most Indonesians believe: the ever present reality of God in everyday life. According to Khaled Abou El Fadl, 'religious convictions (...) affect the way reality is defined and comprehended (...) [it is] among the most powerful forces affecting human determinations, choices and possible courses of behaviour (...) an essential frame for all normative judgement.'[31] Hence, in El Fadl's conception God is a significant force in constructing the perceptions of reality and defining the choices that a Muslim must make when confronted with the possibilities of identifying her/his religious stand, balancing her or his submission to God and responsibilities as God's vicegerent on earth. Thus, any kind of subjugation to any human authority is necessarily displaced and refuted. This is not unproblematic, however, as it raises the question of Islamic authenticity. On the one hand, claims of Islamic authenticity can be made by particular groups in particular times, and this has been proven with several cases ranging from Islamic fundamentalism to liberalism. On the other hand, Islam is never monolithic. Islam has shown many faces across space and time, and there is room for negotiation and reconciliation by acknowledging the dynamics of human interpretations and their fallibility. When the notion of servanthood is contextualised Islam opens room for a substantial constituency favouring justice and equality, and certainly disclaims any oppression as un-Islamic. In looking at issues concerning women, the two basic concepts in Islam, *'adl* (just) and *ma'ruf* (virtue,) need to be seen from the perspective of the social actors – in this case women – who can authenticate their own agency.

Titis' characters find a strategy to construct their own identities within their religiosity; they also find ways to empowerment while living in a patriarchal dominated world. The discourse of identity, which Titis presents in her four novels, politicises a discursive mode of the text; it moves from different types of women but rests on one single line that places female subjectivity within a feminist reading of religious attainment.

Polygamy and Infidelity

The problematic perception of polygamy within the domain of female subjectivity and identity is also one of the unique characteristics of Titis' writings. Of the four authors only Titis shows a consistency in de-

picting polygamy and women's reactions to it. In Indonesia's Islamic cultural politics, polygamy issues are perhaps the most difficult to deal with. The institutionalisation of polygamy within the *fiqh* is not strongly challenged, although this does not necessarily mean that women condone it. During the November 2004 *Muktamar* NU (NU Congress) in Boyolali, Central Java, women activists launched a strong protest against the organising committee because the meals for the participants were supplied by the Wong Solo restaurant whose owner was an active propagandist of polygamy; he himself had four wives, the number sanctioned in Islamic jurisprudence. Sinta Nuriyah Abdurrahman Wahid argued that the aim of the protest was to defend the true Islamic *shari'a* and bring justice for all kinds, particularly those who were under oppression such as women, minority groups and the poor.[32] She stated that polygamy was violence against women's rights and as such was legally opposed by the United Nations. In reaction to the Polygamy Award[33] of July 2003, Muslim activists put anti-polygamy objections into their agendas; the activists strongly protested the ceremony, proclaiming that it was an attempt to undermine the women's movement and Maria Ulfah Anshor said it was necessarily un-Islamic in its nature.[34]

The Department of Religious Affairs introduced a new Marriage Act, known as the Counter Legal Draft Kompilasi Hukum Islam (KHI – Compilations of Islamic Law/Family Code), outlining a zero tolerance policy to any violence against women. The intention of the draft was to rectify the currently applied KHI – in particular it targeted polygamy and advocated that women should inherit the same portion as men. Siti Musdah Mulia, the chairperson of the team set up by the Ministry of Religious Affairs to write the draft, stated that the KHI was not based on basic Islamic principles such as principles of equality (*al musawah*), fraternity (*al-ikha*) and justice (*al-adl*).[35] The prohibition of polygamy, the permission for a woman above 21 years of age to conduct a marriage without the consent of a *wali* (the bride's father, brother or a male family member from the father's side), and permission for interfaith marriages were amongst the changes introduced in the draft. The reaction to the proposed changes was enormous as they were immediately taken as a breach of the interpretation of the existing *fiqh*; this was particularly so in the case of polygamy. Moderate and progressive Muslim scholars argued that the draft could be 'part of a revolution in *shari'a*', whereas mainstream and right-wing scholars argued that the draft was heresy. In reaction to the controversy the Minister of Religious Affairs, on 14 February 2005, issued a ban on the discussion of the draft revision of the Islamic Family Code. A coalition of twenty-seven women's NGOs protested, arguing that the ban was contradictory to Islamic principles, which tolerate differences in opinions.[36]

Even amongst activists of women's movements and feminists themselves there are varying views about the prohibition of polygamy. Siti Ruhayani Dzuhatin, the Chair of Women's Studies in the State Institute of Islamic Studies, argues against the prohibition because she believes polygamy should only be limited, not prohibited.[37] Julia Suryakusuma, a well-known feminist, proposed a resolution to the problem in her article, 'Poligami ala feminist'. She believes that being 'a part-time wife' will give her more freedom to exercise her own needs while sharing the household responsibilities with the other wife(s). Moreover, she advocates that new wives should be relatively older than the first wife because older women tend to be more self-wise and experienced in dealing with psychological problems such as jealousy and competition among wives, in this way, the tensions amongst wives can be reduced to a minimum.[38] Although it is presumed to be satirical, the article does offer a new way of looking at polygamy practices by creating new meanings out of such 'dubious' practices.

It is not clear in Titis' narratives whether she agrees with or opposes polygamy. In her short story entitled *Dia* (Her), Titis depicts the emotional responses of a woman dealing with a polygamous marriage. The story reveals the psychological responses of the first wife whose husband takes a second wife; the suffering she has to endure:

> Each time he left I felt a terrible loneliness. It was almost as though I had a wound that left no scar. Still, I tried not to let my health deteriorate. There was no question about what would become of the children. They would be taken to their father's other wife. It was for this reason that I was careful to disguise my emotions and maintain the harmony in our home – a home without a husband. Whether or not the children understood this sacrifice I'll never know; they were too young to express such thoughts. I simply went about life swallowing my pride with rice.[39]

This voice probably represents the most natural response of a first wife, examining and essentialising the notion of sacrifice, which is not uncommon for Indonesian wives having no legal recourse against a husband's polygamy. On the one hand, her sacrifice can be read as woman's position under man's domination – *nasib,* which Titis writes about in most of her works. On the other hand, if it is read against the grain, it indeed shows a woman's strength to endure pain and suffer. Nevertheless, as strong as she might be, her response to polygamy illustrates the positioning of a woman victimised by the practice of polygamy, particularly when religious determinism takes control:

> A husband has the right to practice polygamy, and this was a test of my tolerance. I devoutly believed that as a woman I was destined to accept and protect. I had believed that, and also considering the fate of my children, I would merely have asked for a divorce and left him.[40]

In this narrative it seems that it becomes the woman's responsibility; that it is her natural *raison d'être* to sacrifice at all costs for her family and her children, but never for herself. This correlates to the conception of *kodrat*, which requires women, especially mothers, to be submissive and sacrifice for the good of all family members. In other words, 'harga perempuan' (woman's value), is always measured from her familial identity.

The final resolution of Titis' *Dia* is quite challenging. The reconciliation established between the first and the second wife indeed illustrates an acclamation of the female ability to stage a dialogue between two women who desire to navigate their familial politics within the settings of polygamy. The two wives meet at a women's convention, and this meeting completely changes the first wife's repudiation of her competitor and she accepts her wholeheartedly. Rivalry has turned into sisterhood:

> [N]ow I was being vindicated by the very one who had been the cause of my misery. I appreciated her where I have once feared her. (...) now I was impressed with the graceful manner in which she protected her rival's feelings. (...) She also had a right to a husband, even though fate decreed that he also be mine.[41]

Again, fate, or *nasib*, is the primary locus for women and they are expected to act within it, implying that religious submission and servanthood are the core modes of religious commitment. The heroine's final acceptance of polygamy may be seen as a backlash against feminism; however, the problematic issue of polygamy, exemplified through Titis' characters, deserves further examination. Titis' representation of the heroines who authenticate their female agencies through polygamy and sisterhood render these women subjects at the centre of speech, of female voice. Their negotiation with *nasib*, *kodrat* and domestication, enables them to secure a place in broader social activism as they leap from domestic life to a more public life. Both the first (older) and the second (younger) wife are activists of women's organisations, and having a co-wife means more time to work in their organisational activism: as the first wife says, 'I felt like a new woman'.[42] In this narrative, there seems to be a conception of hierarchy: the first wife receives more than the second. In reality, however, when polygamy is practiced

without the consent of the first wife, commonly the second wife is more privileged. Whether the first, the second, the third or the fourth wife is more privileged, such a hierarchy certainly defies the concept of justice and equality, because polygamous marriage supposedly applies equality and justice to all wives and all children.

The achievement of Titis' heroines – self-empowerment through polygamy – should not be immediately perceived as what all women in polygamous marriages achieve. *Dia* reflects particularity of specific women under specific circumstances. That the practice of polygamy can lead to violence against women is supported by research. The *Jurnal Perempuan* (*JP*, Women's Journal) no 31 (2003) had a special edition on polygamy – *Menimbang Poligami* (Measuring Polygamy) – based on studies and researches conducted by women activists and women's NGOs. In this special edition polygamy is criticised, confronted and also defended from a variety of female perspectives, including because of its historiography and roots in different religions such as Hinduism and Christianity. Nevertheless, the strongest emphasis was on polygamy as violence against women: be it as state policy in legitimising polygamy, as state violence against women, or polygamy as domestic violence. The studies also showed that women of all social and economic classes experience violence because of polygamy.

Titis' works, *Pelabuhan Hati* (Harbour of the Heart, 1978), *Aku Supiyah Istri Hardian* (I am Supiyah, Hardian's Wife, 1998) and its sequel *Tersenyumpun Tidak Untukku Lagi* (Your Smile is Not for Me, 1998), depict the victimisation of women because of polygamy. *Pelabuhan Hati*, which first appeared in short story form entitled *Meja Gambar*, is a classic narrative of a wife's fidelity against her husband's infidelity and polygamy. The early nuptial years of the characters Rani and Ramelan were without significant problems. However, this changed when they achieved better economic and social attainments. Ramelan, an architect, promised Rani a new and better house and out of curiosity Rani, without Ramelan's permission, went to see the house for herself; she found Ramelan there with a young girl. Later Ramelan admitted to Rani that the girl was his younger wife. In other words, Ramelan had taken a second wife without Rani's consent. Rani asked Ramelan for a divorce and the story continues with Rani's struggle as a single mother with small children to survive and to cope with the pain and her denigrated status as a *janda muda* (young divorcee).

Similar to Rani, Supiyah in *Aku Supiyah Istri Hardhian* and *Tersenyumpun Tidak Untukku Lagi* experiences the victimisation of polygamy. Behind Supiyah's back, Hardhian, Supiyah's husband, takes two other wives: the twins Fitri and Fatma, his former students. Supiyah, however, copes with Hardhian's infidelity in a different way to Rani. If Rani is a representation of a housewife lacking economic resources,

Supiyah has a stronger bargaining position. Like her husband, she is also a university lecturer and financially able to support herself and her family; the absence of Hardhian's economic support did not significantly affect her financially but Supiyah feels humiliated and betrayed because she is a respected member of the intellectual community. Moreover, it was still Supiyah who needs to sacrifice for her children's sake and find ways to cope with her emotional turmoil stemming from such circumstances:

> Yet, everyday I ignored Hardhi's behaviour, which neglected our household and me. The children did not feel that something was wrong as all of their needs were well fulfilled, so they kept continuing their schooling perfectly. With the courage of the waves of the Indian Ocean, I felt alive again. And from my prayers to the One, I forgot my sadness. Teaching at the faculty was my happiness and revived my pride; maybe my students too felt the changes in me.[43]

Supiyah's ability to survive after her husband's betrayal was not without difficulty. Hardhian's marries a second and third wife and Supiyah divorces him. However, her divorce leaves a psychological mark as she still loves Hardhian, even though she marries Sofyan, a wealthy widower. Her marriage to Sofyan is her way of revenging Hardhian's betrayal, proving that she too is a compatible opponent for Hardhian in the battle, but also that she is in need of a man to secure her position as a married woman, not a *janda*.[44] In her imagination, Supiyah dares to construct a world comparable to a man's where she can practice polyandry by marrying both Hardhian and Sofyan. Nevertheless, it is just an imaginary construction, the practice of polyandry in Islam, as in other religions, is completely prohibited and is condemned as immoral.

Rani in *Pelabuhan Hati* is another characterisation of a victimised woman because of infidelity and polygamy. In marrying his second wife, Laksmi, Ramelan completely ignores the emotional and economic needs of Rani and their children. Not only does Rani lament the favouritism shown by Ramelan to Laksmi, the younger and more attractive wife, the children too perceive the mistreatment suffered by their mother and are also despondent:

> I sent my children to school by paddy cab. I no longer familiarised my children by using the car and so no longer reminded them of their father. Gradually I erased the memory of having a father from my children's minds. At first, the children still waited for their father's coming home from his office, but I told

> them that the one who was waited for would never arrive again because he was busy with his project out of town. Milk and meat gradually disappeared from the dining table. Since I never spoiled my children, they did not really feel that they had lost nutritious food important for their growth.[45]

Economic change also becomes an expression of desertion. Ramelan's polygamy did not only cause his family financial and psychological problems, it also caused Rani to have the denigrated social status of *janda*. When Rani decides to turn her house into a boarding house for male students in order to have more income, she is perceived as a wicked seducer who preys on young men. The accusation of her being *janda gatal* (seductive widow, literally meaning 'itchy widow') also comes from Ramelan, who offers her money if she will end her boarding house. Ramelan says that Rani has become the talk of the town without realising that Rani is indeed the victim of his act. Rani refuses Ramelan's money thus claiming her independence: Rani's suffering has made her stronger and she is no longer afraid.[46] The rest of the story depicts Rani's empowerment and the ways she sustains herself and her family as a single woman. Sadly, her agency can only be achieved after she is psychologically and financially abused through her husband's abandonment.

The stories of Supiyah and Rani show that polygamous marriages are open to abuse. They also clearly picture the inability of husbands to disseminate justice, the very condition of polygamy: 'If you fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one.'[47] A literal reading of the verse of the Qur'an provides that justice must characterise the practices of polygamy, yet in reality these two conditions are hardly achievable. Also, polygamy, as the verse suggests, can only be justified under particular circumstances, particularly in relation to a man's inability to deal justly with the orphans. Being an orphan in seventh century patriarchal Arabia was parallel to being left without protection and at risk of abuse. Polygamy is permitted only when a man fears he cannot justly treat the orphans; if he fears his inability to treat his wives justly, monogamy is obligatory. It can be argued that if the condition foregrounding polygamy fails to exist, monogamy is superior. Furthermore, Calislar, quoted by Benard, asserts that the role of polygamy in early Islam was designed as a 'welfare project', protecting widows whose husbands were killed at wars and to be their breadwinners as well.[48] Taken into a broader framework, those early polygamy practices, Calislar adds, aimed to create alliances for political or charitable causes, rather than simply personal ones. Indeed, the two of Titis' stories leave the

clear impression of injustice and inequality. Polygamy in these Titis' stories is practiced based not on the circumstances conditioned by the verses mentioned; it is simply based on personal interests.

In scrutinising polygamy today many Muslim feminists, including activists of women NGOs in Indonesia, propose that it should be restricted because it contributes to injustice and domestic violence against women. In the special edition of *Jurnal Perempuan* (see above) LBH Apik, an NGO for legal advocacy and justice for women which dealt with women victims of polygamy – physical, sexual and economic abuse, and abandonment of themselves and their children – called for the practice to be banned completely.[49] Although the KHI emphasises the concept of justice in legitimising polygamous marriage; a husband must treat all wives and children equally and the first wife's consent must be obtained before any subsequent marriages, the same codes still secure the possibility for a husband to practice polygamy without the first wife's consent.[50] In other words, the religious court can issue the consent if the first wife refuses to do so. Here, the state clearly supports polygamy even though the state says it promotes monogamy.

In Indonesia, culture, religion and state interference have deeply institutionalised polygamy; simply banning it is thus both paradoxical and complicated. Women's responses to polygamy are also far from a consensus. Some argue that, because polygamy results more in *madharat* (vices) than *maslahat* (virtues), it should, therefore, be entirely prohibited. Others reason that it should be limited, and yet others argue for a compromise: applying an idealised condition that it must provide justice amongst the wives. The latter also argue that polygamy fosters a domestic environment of shared responsibilities, thus easing the household and economic workload for women. Yet another concern about the practice concerns the status of children. Most of Titis' narratives concerning polygamy considerably neglect the presence of children, and the impact that the absence of a father has on them. The absence of in-depth portrayals of children in most of Titis' stories can be reasoned as the author privileging women's responses to polygamy. Perhaps the absence of children in Titis' narratives shows that when polygamy is practiced, children are never taken into account. Polygamy is a 'grown-up thing' and children are considered to have no part in it. Indeed, such an attitude ignores the way the practice affects all family members, including children. The neglect of the fate of the abandoned children seems at odds with the importance of woman as mother in both the New Order era, and in Islamic values.

Titis never blatantly criticises polygamy but she does present multi-pictures of polygamous practices, the affect upon women's lives and the ever-present despair that pervades households. Titis reveals her multi-allegiances – for and against polygamy – through narratives

where her characters have room for self-disclosure. Covering information on various female responses of polygamy Titis paints women's voices of objection, anger or compromise as they deal with Islamic tenets of spousal responsibilities. In capturing women's responses to polygamy Titis never develops extreme one-dimensional characters of good and evil, instead she works on multifaceted representations of these women. In her narratives Titis reveals polygamy as dynamic and therefore in need of careful scrutiny and contextualisation. It seems that in her narratives Titis implicitly impresses the notion of female subjugation, yet her narratives commonly end with female self-fulfilment and satisfaction due to their ability to make choices for themselves. She creates heroines who take action to obstruct gender bias, declining to play the role of victim forever, even in matters where room for choice is limited; Titis' characters show the ways women exercise their agency.

Gender Hierarchy in the Narratives of Ratna Indraswati Ibrahim

The characters in Ratna's short stories are multi-dimensional women who deal with and negotiate their politics of positioning in a male-dominated world. Ratna has published eight collections of short stories, each with an initial print run of 1,000; the biggest sales were for *Bukan Pinang Dibelah Dua* and *Lemah Tanjung* (no figure mentioned). Another 300 or so other short stories are scattered in various newspapers.[51] Her stories commonly rest on the personification of rural women, whom she believes to be the closest representations of the majority of women in Indonesia, and as such her stories are based on and inspired by rural women's true stories: her texts impart the real conditions of rural women. In her narratives Ratna asks a number of core questions about domestic violence: why are women silent in the face of domestic abuse; is this silence cultural or natural; is the victimisation of women largely due to the existence of a gender hierarchy where men are ranked above women; if so, in what way(s) can women confront such positioning; and why is the number of female victims higher than the number of male victims?[52] As she asks these questions in her narratives Ratna criticises the social, cultural and religious constellations, which sustain the patriarchal system and subjugate women. The debate between tradition and modernity also enriches Ratna's narratives; she constantly portrays various women in today's Indonesia whose roles are very much coloured by their engagement with conflicting visions of tradition and modernity. As such, her narratives reveal the contentiousness of the debates within feminist writings and readings on authenticity, identity, struggle and community. The following

discussion will look at some of Ratna's short stories, but it will also examine her novelette, *Bukan Pinang Dibelah Dua,* and her most recent novel, *Lemah Tanjung,* within the context of feminist readings.

Valuing the Price of Woman: Female Subjectivity, Identity and the Body

Some, if not most, of Ratna's narratives centre on the discourse of women's bodies and this is the reason for incorporating her works within the perspective of Muslim female politics of identity. Opinion is still divided as to how, or indeed whether, such an issue should be talked about. How a woman's body is perceived, by whom, and for what agenda, is still very much subject to interpretation. On the one hand, it is largely assumed that within Islamic values women must be covered, and their body discourses must be de-politicised. On the other hand, it is argued that to follow the 'woman's body woman's rights' concept, means women can have their own voice about their own bodies. Ratna's work deserves attention for showing the variety of discourses. In her stories her female characters are not clearly identified in terms of what they are wearing, although some of the characters are clearly not *jilbab* wearers. Thus, Ratna's narratives do not emphasise the way characters dress; of more importance is how their body politics are read and signified within the societal constellation. As discussed previously the choice of wearing a *jilbab* or not should be left to women to decide, because Muslim women are composed of various classes, cultures, and their interpretations and practices of the ways they make meaning out of their religious commitments consequently vary. Ratna's stories, which involve discourses of the body within the politics of Muslim women's identity, are significant for the variety of ways of seeing women; in particular the way a husband views a wife, as he is largely believed to be the sole proprietor of his wife's body.

In her introduction to the collection of her short stories entitled *Noda Pipi Seorang Perempuan* (A Spot on a Woman's Cheek) Ratna states that most of her writings are interconnected within a single grand theme: the disempowerment of those marginalised, such as children, women and the elderly, by a superior power; be it the superiority of the state, the patriarchy, or even the feudalism legitimised by the New Order regime speaking only in the name of authority and dominance.[53] Her short story *Noda Pipi Seorang Perempuan* (A Spot on a Woman's Cheek), in the collection of the same name,[54] exemplifies her argument clearly. This story narrates the fear of a wife who believes she is no longer attractive because she has a spot on her cheek. She tells herself that once she was beautiful, but not now:

> She now felt a heavy burden placed on her. There was no one complimenting her beauty any more. Then, even as a child, she had something to be proud of. Once again she looked at herself in the mirror. She started to complain, 'You see, how ugly this spot on my cheek.'[55]

The character believes that her previous respect was because of her beauty, and she wants cosmetic surgery to correct her blemish. When her husband declines her request for surgery she is furious, and finds another man who desires her and who confirms that she is still beautiful. When this other man asks her to be his mistress she suddenly realises that she does not want to betray her marriage, and decides to tell her husband that her intention was merely to prove to herself that she is still beautiful, even with a spot on her cheek. She finally decides to accept the spot as a mark on her body.

Noda Pipi Seorang Perempuan is tactical, in that it brings the notion of woman's body right to the centre of the representation of women in Indonesian literary and cultural expressions. In Ratna's argument, woman's beauty, which is indeed much appreciated by women themselves, evidenced with the numerous women's magazines mostly dictating tips to be physically attractive and beautiful, is problematic. The valuing and devaluing of women in terms of their beauty is sustained in a society where femininity is articulated only through their bodies. The body narrative in women's literature calls into question this necessarily 'true' vision on women's value because it proposes the articulation of women's bodies through female narrative voices which aim to ascertain that women's bodies are not only the affair of women. Women's bodies are a battlefield where the politics of female positioning is debated and polemicised. Body narratives suggest that a woman's body can never radically escape from the male gaze, signifying that women are, by and large, identified by man's eyes. Nevertheless, from the male gaze women can, in turn, look at their own bodies, which signals the gaze returned and a commemoration of valuing their femaleness. In other words, woman's identity operates in a circular motion of how woman devalues herself from male gaze from which she returns the gaze and enables herself to value her body. She then becomes visible, turning herself from an observed and passive object into an active subject defining her ownership of the body.

The main character in *Noda Pipi* remains nameless throughout the narrative. By not naming her main character – not making her a special individual – Ratna shows that the problems of woman's beauty are applicable to all women, making it central to woman's identity. The nameless woman of Ratna's story generates a dichotomy. On the one hand, the nameless woman involves a lack of identity, of personhood,

that is essential for any individual. On the other hand, the nameless woman transports herself from specific to general agent. This is the same for the husband who also remains nameless throughout the story. The parallel of the nameless husband and wife (of man and woman) acts progressively, playing the gender politics of equality between nameless man and nameless woman.

Rambutnya Juminten[56] (Juminten's Hair) also focuses on the politics of a woman's body. Ratna admits that this story was created as a result of patriarchal ideology imposing a husband's authority on his wife's body, in this case, her hair.[57] In this story, hair also functions as a metaphor for a woman's identity, body and beauty. The story recalls how Juminten must submit her wish to model her hair to her husband. Panuwun, Juminten's husband, never ceases to remind her that she beautifies herself for her husband only. Juminten wants to have her hair cut for easier care, but Panuwun declines her request saying that with long hair she would look like Nawang Wulan, a beautiful goddess. Despite her allergy to the shampoo Panuwun gives her, showing her loyalty to Panuwun, Juminten continues to grow her hair. Juminten's long hair attracts Nardi, the son of Panuwun's employer, and through jealousy Panuwun limits Juminten to their home. She is forbidden to leave their house without his escort, even to join a female congregation of Qur'anic reading and reciting (*pengajian*). Some villagers support Panuwun's decision, while others say that Panuwun oppresses his wife. Believing that the problems are all because of Juminten's hair, despite her protest, Panuwun finally orders Juminten to have her hair cut very short.

An Indonesian proverb says that hair is a woman's crown. This, by and large, places a woman's body central to female identity, in that the body is parcelled and policed through a discursive system, which establishes identity through a relationship process between parts of the body and assigned cultural meanings. Hair, representing the body, becomes a fragmented agent in determining the sexual identification, strongly suggesting that parts of the body must implement specific functions, and be situated in appropriate places, to be considered normal. This is what Judith Butler calls, the 'integrity' and 'unity' of the body. Drawing her reading from Monique Wittiq's theory on sex and gender, Butler posits that 'numerous features [of the body] gain social meaning and unification through their articulation within the category of sex [consequently] "integrity" and "unity" of the body, often thought to be positive ideals, serve the purposes of fragmentation, restriction and domination.'[58] The cultural meaning assigned to this material body part pervades body politics and hair becomes a metaphor for the social. Because it is part of her body Juminten has no right over her hair; she must relinquish her ownership and is subjected to her husband's order.

Hair, then, signifies fragmentation, restriction and domination at the same time. Although Ratna does not explicitly state the significance of Juminten's hair with interpretations of women's beauty in Islam, this, however, correlates to a verse in the Qur'an restricting a woman to display her beauty and ornaments only to her husband and those not eligible to marry her.[59] Although there is no consensus about what constitutes 'beauty and ornaments', the institutionalised interpretation of this verse in Indonesian contexts emphasises that a woman should not display her beauty other than to her husband. Panuwun's rule for Juminten clearly shows the application of this verse. Public admiration of Juminten's hair must certainly be prohibited and declared to be a breach of refined manners. As this was caused by Juminten's hair, placing the blame on Juminten alone is necessary. The problematic body part in the story stimulates the subject position and narrative paradigm in which contemporary women take up the body through literary practices. The body story, for the author, the character and the reader, functions simultaneously as a personal and political, psychological and ideological boundary of meaning, a subjected agency through which identity and objectification emerge. The corporeal body is turned into a cultural 'body' in which oppressive cultural identification is clearly visible and articulated. This short story is indeed interesting, as the author illustrates the repression and the marginalisation of the female body by unfolding the power of domination, and directly scrutinising the body and its cultural meanings. In so doing, this particular story is in itself a cultural critique of the patriarchal hegemony, and at the same time it creates an awareness of the relationship between a specific body, the cultural 'body', and body politics.

Delimitation and Definition of Female Identity

The problematic nature of woman and her body (and hence her sexuality), is not the only subject of Ratna's writings. Woman can also be the subject of subjectivity, through which the universal human subject has been culturally secured, and she too can embody the complexities of her cultural assignments. With her narratives Ratna attempts to picture such subjectivity through representation and thus into identities, which are secured by narrative representations. In her stories *Lebur* (Melted) and *Bunga Mentega* (*Mentega* Flower), she speaks of the assigned identity of a 'true woman': the language of martyrdom and tireless self-sacrifice that often supersedes physical and emotional discomforts. The women in these stories are labelled by others as 'true women' who are sensitive to suffering, eager to sacrifice themselves to others, willing to serve as vessels for another's will.

Lebur[60] engages the story of Liana who has to accept a man's marriage proposal against her will. Liana wishes to accept Jono's proposal but the timing is not right: she is not ready for marriage as she wants to have a job of her own to enable her to finance the education of her younger siblings. As the eldest child, her mother (her father is deceased) relies heavily on her. This is typical of Indonesian values: culturally the eldest child has more responsibility for helping the family's financial sources. When she fails to find a job Liana has no choice but to accept Jono's proposal for Jono has promised her, and her mother, he will finance her siblings' education. Here, economic hardship becomes central in defining female identity. Liana must surrender her own wish and submit to the family's interest. Jono's wealth and Liana's poverty are juxtaposed to give readers the clear idea that the politics of economics is closely intertwined with the shaping of female subjectivity and identity. Liana is by no means unaware of her situation but she is incapable of reacting against her economic positioning:

> If her job application were accepted, she would sail in the blue ocean together with the seagulls, she would go to a town in Kalimantan and that town would be far away from her mother. (...) [she said to herself] 'My God, I don't love Jono! Am I selfish? Oh God, if I refuse Jono's proposal it means that I don't want to help my family. Now with this flame of love of mine I knock on Your door. Which door could I enter so that I could give You this love (...) God, which door could I enter? Then as if there was a voice, 'Here all doors are never closed, as long as you want to enter.' [61]

Liana gives up her freedom because of economic position and, most importantly, to be a 'true woman' who is expected to sacrifice her own will. Her identity has already been delimited; martyrdom is a female affair. However, from a character who begins the narrative in a marginal position, Liana finally is able to reverse the narrative dynamics and call into question her victimisation, by turning and consoling herself that she (like Titis Basino's characters) is searching for the love of God. In so doing, she is able to manage her sacrifice, because she believes that, perhaps through her sacrifice, she will be able to attain God's love. Liana's sacrifice, to a certain degree, is a form of restriction and delimitation of female freedom. However, instead of feeling hopeless and subdued she reacts against such confinement by submitting herself to the greatest power, which Muslims believe in – the love of God, and because of this she is prepared to endure the oppression forced upon her. The value of this story lies in its ability to explore subtly the cultural norms of oppression, which largely delimit female space, without bla-

tantly attacking such oppression. Ratna informs readers of the marginality and exploitation endured by Indonesian Muslim women.

Bunga Mentega[62] is another narrative of the restriction of female space and freedom. The story concerns Rusmini, a junior high school teacher, who has to give up her dream of becoming a flight attendant because of her sex. In this story public and domestic space are sharply divided: only men can occupy public space, women must stay in the domestic. Because of cultural norms Rusmini abandons her yearning to 'see the world': she has to reside in the domestic world and take care of her ill mother, whereas her brother is given the opportunity to 'see the world'.

> 'I just want to see the world,' she could only say to her brother. She [Rusmini] never wanted to do anything [but be a flight attendant]. But, since that night, she dreamt of wearing the uniform of a flight attendant and travelling around the cities of the world (...) [and] one day she would write about her journey in every corner of the world.[63]

Ratna's story reveals the cultural norm: adventure is not part of the women's world, only men can travel and be adventurous. The division of the female domestic and the male public is seen as a natural division. Rusmini's brother, Rahman, decides to quit his university studies and see the world. 'A man must see the world before getting married,'[64] their mother replies when Rahman tells her of his decision. But when Rusmini mentions that her application to be a flight attendant has been accepted, her mother and all family members simply say: 'It's better for you to be a teacher and accompany your mother at home. If you and your brother want to travel around the world whom will your mother stay with?'[65] For Rusmini her identity has already been fixed and sealed: being a teacher and getting married as the ultimate goal. Even in a society where Rusmini's ability to work as a teacher underlines the claims of offering equal opportunities for the social mobility of women, marriage is still regarded as the only means for women to improve their status and form their identity.

Rahman is expected to freely traverse geographical boundaries before entering married life in which a man is considered an adult: a full member of society. It is different for Rusmini. To be fully regarded as a societal member she must perform her domestic obligations. It is culturally determined that, as a daughter, Rusmini must care for the elderly, and experience confinement, because she is a woman. Although as a teacher Rusmini occupies a job outside the home, her dream of extending her world beyond her family is restricted. Her world is fixed between her family and her teaching job, and although she dreams of

leaving her family behind and pursuing a career of her own choosing it is not possible. Opposition to her living outside her family world functions as both sign and proof of the culture's devaluation of women. It is indeed interesting that Ratna uses 'the female job' in juxtaposing the strict dichotomy between domestic and public spheres. Being a flight attendant is largely regarded as a woman's job as it mainly provides service and care, which are closely associated with the female world. Ratna's narrative indicates that women are delimited within a constructed world of domesticity. In her story she critically accommodates where society has placed women even though their work appears to be different. Her story shows that the sharp division between women's and men's spheres is a powerful means of reinforcing dominant patriarchal ideologies, but it also shows that the subject status of women embodies tactical reinterpretations of those ideologies.

Within the defining of women's identity, one discursive practice contributing to such defining is the limited freedom given to women. If men are supported in extending their private territorial boundaries, women are not. If freedom is associated with men, women are associated with restriction. Women are defined as wives, mothers and bearers of future citizens, rather than in terms of social roles, which portray them as full social beings endowed with autonomy, social control and prestige in their own right. Freedom is certainly a contested arena, strongly administered to ensure that it will not contradict women's domesticity. The story *Bukan Pinang Dibelah Dua* (Not an Identical Twin) reflects the problematic of female freedom and independence. The story, mostly through a monologue of the narrator, Yana, illustrates her struggle for freedom. Yana has a twin sister, Yani. They have a similar physical appearance, personalities, achievements and expectations; Yana wants to break this definition. In so doing, she has to leave her home and family. She leaves home and works as a typist for Nuke, her relative, who at the age of forty is still single. Yana says to her family:

> It's time for me to be myself. There is only emptiness here. Mum and Dad never take me as Yana who has a different opinion and style from Yani. Mum and Dad are just like most people, believing that twins have exact the same tastes and opinions in everything. You can't treat me like Yani who is smart in everything she does. With leaving this house, people will be able to distinguish me from Yani. I hope Mum and Dad can respect our different principles.[66]

Yana's choice to leave home is not supported by her parents who believe being a typist is a marginal occupation, and one that will not secure her future. Yet Yana deliberately chooses this job in order to prove

to her parents and society that she is different to Yani. Her desire is to be a writer and have autonomy outside the shadow of her famous family name, 'I am Yana and I don't want people to know me because of my family's big name (...). I will start from scratch. I will gain success through my own effort.'[67] Freedom and independence is Yana's greatest goal. In her society, however, autonomy for women is always suspect. An autonomous woman not subject to man's control is regarded as potentially threatening to the male-dominated social order. Yana's quest is not an easy one, especially when she decides to break off her relationship with Indra, her fiancé, before leaving for her new job. She is persistent in her efforts to move on and attain autonomy. For her, independence is the freedom to choose, or not to choose, the alternatives that life brings[68], and to exist without any constraints.[69] Yana's search for autonomy does not stop as the story ends. As Nuke finally decides to get married, her employment is no longer necessary and she feels betrayed by Nuke's wedding. Yet, she completely understands that Nuke does what society expects, and Nuke has her own freedom to choose what is best for her. Nuke's brother, Priambodo, reminds her that freedom and youth are interconnected: that as a young girl she needs to 'see the world', to leave home to become her own self.[70] What is most important in this story is Yana's claim to her own female identity: she sees self-possession as the essential core, which is only gained through the possession of freedom and autonomy through her own agency.

Yana's method of resistance includes her effort to construct herself as different from Yani. Among other things, her difference is manifested when she decides to become a fiction writer, despite all the criticism from her family. She suppresses the modes of power, which undermine the construction of her identity, by choosing a profession regarded as marginal by her family. Unlike Yani who lives her life controlled by her rationality, her sister and parents often mock Yana because they consider her life full of nonsense imagination. According to her sister she is a daydreamer. Whereas Yani chose to settle her life within her family's security Yana intends to live outside it: she prefers to live a life that might generate unexpected results. She also refuses to reside at 'home' and takes an alternative path to live by her own ideals, though such ideals require her to make her own living and surrender her bourgeois family background. For Yana, difference becomes her trope; it enables her to separate herself from her sister, and herself from others, and she uses this to make sense of herself. The binary oppositions presented in this text, such as rational/imaginary, home/away, settle/unsettle, function as a process of differentiation, division and splitting which constructs subjectivity and identity, and this is best understood as a process which is always in the making, is never fin-

ished and complete. As William Connolly argues, it is difference through which all identities are formed: one knows one's self through one's difference from some other and all identities are simultaneously threatened by the difference(s) of the other.[71] However, Yana's difference is not entirely substantiated. Ratna leaves Yana's story open and it is not clear whether Yana has achieved her difference. Thus, the readers are reminded that the process may never be completed, because the contingent nature of identity is ambiguous and contested. Yana herself does not know where her choice will lead her, but she knows that she has to leave Nuke's house and go to a new place. Her search for identity is never meant to be settled, and this notion of unsettling creates her modes of resisting any delimitation of female identity.

The In-between-ness

Best known as a short story writer, Ratna expanded her talent by publishing her first novel, *Lemah Tanjung,* in 2003. This novel, based on a true story, concerns the struggle of local residents – led by an environmental activist named Ibu Indri – to preserve the only green area in the city of Malang, Lemah Tanjung. The novel narrates the story of Gita, the main character, whose involvement in Ibu Indri's struggles enables her to resolve the problematic of her identity. Gita is married to Paul, who is of Chinese descent, and they have a teenage daughter, Bonet. In 1998 Indonesia experienced political and social upheavals, and Chinese Indonesians were targeted. Because of the fear of becoming a possible target Paul emigrates to Perth, Australia, and asks Gita and Bonet to follow him as soon as he finds a secure place for them to settle. The story occurs in this 'waiting period' when Gita is unsure about her decision to leave the city and the people she loves most. Her acquaintance with Ibu Indri (often addressed as Bu In) secures her ability to be an agent in constructing her conception of identity and community. From Bu In, Gita learns the meaning of struggle and she begins to question the social roles and responsibilities expected of women. Furthermore, she starts to participate in public life. Bu In's struggles open her eyes and she moves from merely a domestic role to public engagement, becoming aware at the same time of her changing state of consciousness; reflecting her understanding of herself and her situation as related to her social and biological condition. Without saying no to the system which positions her, Gita focuses on positively constructing her own system in order to make meaning of her life and choices. Thus characterised, Gita, in seeking justice and support and an awareness of gender formation, is working within a feminist agenda.

The novel opens with Gita's wish to show Bonet the beauty of fireflies: she writes to a reader's column in a local newspaper enquiring about places to see fireflies. Bu In responds to her letter and their acquaintance begins. Gita and Bonet go to see the fireflies in Lemah Tanjung; this area is embroiled in a dispute, because the local government intends to develop it for shopping malls, whereas Bu In and her group of environmental activists insist the area must be left as a home for various endangered species of birds and plants. (The story ends without resolving the dispute). The more Gita sees of Bu In's struggles to preserve Lemah Tanjung, the more she is inspired by her strength and empowerment. Bu In is a middle-aged widow with three grown-up children and a lecturer at the *Akademi Penyuluh Pertanian* (APP, Academy of Agricultural Trainings), which was previously located in Lemah Tanjung before being moved to another area, Randu Agung. Bu In opposes the development of Lemah Tanjung because it is the only green area in the city where nature is preserved.

Gita's story is a story of migration and border crossing. Gita's husband, Paul, had never thought of himself as a *keturunan* (a Chinese descendant), as his mother was Sundanese. Identity was not a problem; Paul simply accepted it. Although ethnically/racially[72] he was different to Gita, culturally and religiously he was not. He converted to Islam long before he met Gita and he wants to raise his children in Malang seeing it as a still secure and natural place. The 14th of May 1998 riots changed his mind. Paul is forced to see that ethnically he is different to Gita, and that due to this difference he will be treated differently. Paul witnesses the atrocities against the *keturunan* and their families: his female cousin is raped, and he and his cousin just manage to escape an angry mob of rioters trying to kill them. It is then that Paul begins to question his identity and ethnic difference. Paul believes that he is no longer accepted as an Indonesian, a *pribumi* (native)[73] and he decides to follow his two brothers who had earlier emigrated to Australia. For Paul, despite his conversion to Islam, his ethnic appearance proves more important in the eyes of the wider community than his religion and social position.

Gita is also forced to an awareness of ethnic difference, which at first seemed to be unproblematic. But her new awareness of the difference makes her position difficult. On the one hand, she wants to close this gap between her and Paul, be it an ethnic or spatial difference, thus following Paul will bridge the gap. On the other hand, the idea of displacement worries Gita. She does not want to leave Malang, because it is linked closely to her identity. However, Gita feels her attachment to Malang is no longer secure and she eventually crosses the geographical border and migrates to Australia. Being not actually settled and rooted in a fixed identity she will become one of those migrant identities mov-

ing between two different borders – people with different identifications. Her voyage must then be rooted in two poles, Indonesian and Australian. Her Indonesian identity is at risk with her spatial displacement, Gita understands this and it drives her to empowerment: 'Yes, I know, sooner or later, I must leave Malang, for how long I can't be sure. Perhaps, before leaving this beloved town, I must do something.'[74] Gita decides to create history, her own and her homeland's. Her border crossing is reflected not only in her travels, but also in her decision to marry Paul where she moves beyond her own ethnicity, which is Javanese. But, her most powerful border crossing is perhaps her movement from the domestic to the public arena – from housewifes to social activist.

What Gita does for the rest of the story is not merely empowerment on a personal level, but on social and political levels as well. Previously focusing on just domestic affairs, Gita becomes an environmental activist joining and supporting Bu In's struggles. In her association with Bu In and her NGO she meets numerous activists, including Mbak Syarifah, who later also becomes a mentor. Mbak Syarifah is perhaps the author's persona in the story, although Ratna denies this similarity, saying that Mbak Syarifah is too puritan to be her persona.[75] Like Ratna, the disabled Mbak Syarifah is an activist in numerous NGOs, particularly NGOs whose agendas oppose inequality, injustice and victimisation. Through Mbak Syarifah, Gita learns to be critically aware of any injustice surrounding her. The story is then taken to a more social and political level. It is no longer a story about Gita *per se*; it becomes a powerful apparatus to critically assess the political and social condition of the nation, particularly the chronic conditions of the nation caused by Soeharto's regime. The name Syarifah metaphorically constructs an image of nobility in Muslim identity, as Syarifah derives from the Arabic *syarif* meaning noble: to be *syarif* is to be able to trace the family genealogy to the Quraishi tribe of the Prophet Muhammad in seventh century Arabia. However, in the story Mbak Syarifah is not simply a reference to Arabic descent; rather, her name signifies a personality that, despite physical disability, has a noble quality. It thus parallels her actions to the struggles of the Prophet when promoting justice and equality to the early Muslims. In so doing the narrative connects gender to the ideal struggles of Islam and gives women symbolic importance in striving toward social justice.

When Paul admits he is having an extramarital affair with an Australian journalist, a friend whom they met in Bali, Gita feels betrayed and focuses more on her activism. Gita offers a divorce to Paul who is devastated with the offer and immediately suggests reconciliation, as he is aware his affair is caused by loneliness. Gita is still reluctant to follow Paul for she is deeply involved with Bu In's community. She believes

that even if Paul no longer loves her, she will never feel lonely, because she will still have Bu In, Mbak Syarifah, her best friends and her family at her side through happiness and sadness. Gita strongly trusts in their comradeship. As Mbak Syarifah keeps reminding her, they all met in similar disempowered circumstances where they had to battle against injustice. Moreover, her engagement with Bu In's struggles marks her attempt to root an identification emerging from rejection against injustice. Through her association with Bu In and Mbak Syarifah Gita has developed an awareness of how her identity is constructed. She says to herself:

> I am Paul's wife who should be following him wherever he goes. In fact, I prefer to stay here. If I choose to keep on staying in Malang with Bonet, people and I will consider me to be unfaithful. (...) We are angry with the domestic-social roles [given to us as women] which taught us, whether we are aware of it or not, that we should only want to be just a housewife. We are never taught to be ambitious for a career.[76]

Gita's response to such positioning is her effort to ensure that she can create a new identity, which will accommodate her strategies to challenge the old system. Gita believes that her choices and actions are valuable not only for herself, but for others as well, and that her struggles will be continued by the younger generations. Indeed, Gita has taken her struggle to the higher level. For her, her actions are levelled to *nilai-nilai luhur* (highly-valued norms). Gita tells her daughter that she wants to 'use my time with things beneficial to others.'[77]

During her journey to manufacture and establish her new identity Gita meets challenges and hindrances. Most of her friends are surprised that she engages with Bu In's community. They believe she should just follow her husband, be a mother to Bonet and concentrate merely on domesticity. During these times of despair and disillusionment Bu In is a heroine in Gita's eyes: one who does not easily let herself be bent by circumstance, and she becomes Gita's source of resilience:

> 'Bu In, lately I feel like just giving up,' [Gita lamented to Bu In]. 'I admire you. You never seem to be giving up.' [Bu In answered] 'Sometimes I do want to give up. But, when I am in despair, Mbak, I take a pause and pray to God to give me strength and blessing for what we are doing.'[78]

Bu In's perception of her struggles is typical of Muslims, who believe that any action they execute is framed within the conviction that they

are viceregents whose actions necessitate God's sanction. This also illustrates the theme of religious obedience for Muslims. Ratna's continual message in her narrative is that within religious boundaries, struggle against injustice is part of God's will. Although no characters in the story mention it their resistance (the dominant theme of the novel) can be regarded as *jihad* (to fight in the path of Allah). When Bu In's environmental struggle to revive a sense of nature in everybody's life is modelled and idealised, *jihad* is implicit in the text. Bu In's *jihad* is in civil activism, as *jihad* here is never considered as taking up arms to uphold a specific supremacy. Bu In's *jihad* is unmistakably militant in the sense that she persistently maintains her struggle. Admittedly the war evoked in the story is metaphorical, but the struggle it connotes is no less real. The reality of Bu In's struggle lies both in the narrative and the Real, as this story is based on a true story and on a true female heroine, Bu Indrasi.[79]

The story ends with Gita's decision to finally follow Paul to Australia: she reasons that she is Paul's wife and her place is at his side and Bonet's. The narrative decision is not a surprise, because, as Ratna admits, Gita, like any Indonesian wife, still places herself in between two divergent roles: between the traditional role in domesticity and the more modern role in social activism.[80] Gita could not totally reside in the public arena and neglect her domestic responsibility, even though advancing to the new system guaranteed her a greater role in public affairs, because she was still constructed within the prevailing old system.

Gita, like Yana and most of Ratna's female characters, desires to travel and leave the domestic territory. Travel is significant in Ratna's narratives. This correlates to the last of the five pillars of Islam: the *hajj*, the pilgrimage. One *hadith* says that one must seek knowledge even if one needs to travel to China. Travel for *hajj* and seeking knowledge becomes essential, embodying movement between space and time. The Prophet himself had to undergo a *hijrah* (the Prophet's emigration) to find a place where the practice of Islam was not constrained. Travel may be interpreted as crossing confined boundaries, connecting points of departure and return. For Muslims, travel, be it literal or symbolic, allows simultaneous self-positioning in the local and the global: it also allows movement back to the past and then back to a transformed present. Gita's travel is symbolic of such movement. Malang is the point of departure, then travel to Australia, and then back to Malang again: she desires to return to Malang later as she gets older – as point of return – but her return certainly will be as a transformed woman. Her movement between points of departure and return narrates her in-between-ness, as she moves flexibly across geographical boundaries, which oscillate between destination and origin. Yet, she retains deep

connections with a specific place, her homeland. For Gita, travel is an indispensable part of her material and spiritual identity: identity which is constructed between two poles; between rooting herself in a specific territory and pointing towards another territory, a projected place where travel must be undertaken to connect the gap between Malang and Perth. However, this travel always anticipates return to a realm where the 'fixed' point of departure and return is re-imagined and further travel inspired. Through the story of *Lemah Tanjung*, it can be argued that contemporary forms of identity cannot be simply regarded as continuing the past, although the past undoubtedly shapes present forms. In the context of this story, identity, to a great extent, is generated by the new environments individuals find themselves in. Elements of identity are selectively redefined, reconstructed, created or dropped. Identity thus has to be regarded as a multi-faceted, dynamic and malleable construct. It is formed, maintained and modified by social process and social interaction.

Lemah Tanjung is a remarkable story of how women like Bu In and Mbak Syarifah make meaning of their life in their own way. Gita takes them as her role models. What may be odd in this story is Gita's decision to become involved in the community's efforts to create a better environment when her husband is a victim of ethnic/racial injustice by that very same community. She seems to blind herself to her husband's fear, and to his plight and fear of relocation. Malang appears to be an unjust place for people like Paul. Indeed, Ratna's portrayal of racial injustice against the Chinese (which reached its peak in the May 1998 riots) is worthy of notice, because, through her narrative, Ratna shows the affect the atrocities have on individuals. Paul's fear of discrimination leads him to leave the country; at the same time it shows the problematic position of Chinese Indonesians within Indonesian society. Chinese Indonesians however, are not monolithic; as with the wider society, they too are composed of a variety of classification: for example, *totok*, *peranakan* and *keturunan*.[81] Most Chinese Indonesians largely practice traditional Chinese beliefs and are generally adherents of Christianity or Buddhism. Muslim Chinese are a minority within a minority, and as such there is an unease about their ethnic identity. '[T]he Chinese Muslims are almost like a buffer zone; not fully integrated in either of them, not fully liked by any of them.'[82] Jacobsen suggests the marginalisation of Chinese Muslims results from various causes; partly from the reinforcement of Dutch colonial law racially separating the Dutch, foreign Orientals and indigenous Indonesians in terms of class and economic status, (the Dutch included Chinese Muslims as indigenous), partly from Soekarno's and the New Order's discrimination policies toward the Chinese; and resulting also from internal discrimination of other Chinese toward Chinese Muslims. Those

who convert to Islam are seen 'as endangering the societal position of other Chinese as well as offending the latter's sense of ethnic identification.'[83] Paul exemplifies the minority of the minority. Within such circumstances his flight to Australia is justifiable, although the story never clearly reveals whether he will make his adopted country his own, for he still proclaims himself to be an Indonesian, admitting that his nationality even grows stronger whilst living in Australia.[84] The story ends with the departure of Gita and Bonet to Australia, whether or not they will move back to Malang is never resolved.

This narrative is not only about the struggle of a local environmentalist hero, but it also tackles the violence against the Chinese, the problems within inter-ethnic marriage and the uneasy identity construction of those crossing both geographical and ethnic/race boundaries. Gita is not blind toward Paul's misery: she makes an effort to help Paul overcome his fear and guilt at not being able to help his relative when she was raped. In a consultation with a psychologist she is told that it is necessary for Paul to help himself recover from his trauma.[85] Paul is a victim of social and political construction; he is a victim of political disturbance, because of the failure of the state to protect its citizens by creating a more tolerant and assimilated society. In a world where injustice takes place, such as that experienced by Bu In and Paul, Gita is called to play her part in the struggle against that injustice.

Gita has made an attempt to join the fight against injustice through her involvement with Bu In's community. Although her engagement is not part of stopping the anti-Chinese sentiment that victimises her husband, her activism underlines her effort to be against any oppressive power relations. Bu In is from a minority, just like Paul. It can be argued that in a parallel position, Gita is also fighting for Paul, wishing that if she can tell Paul about Bu In's courage she can convince him that he too can be like Bu In.[86] Gita believes that seeing Bu In's resilience will enable Paul to solve their problems: the gap between them and his loss of his sense of belonging. Gita does not want Paul to go to Australia: she wants him to stay with her in Malang and fight, with her, against ethnic discrimination by showing the public that she and Paul, despite their ethnic difference, can create a tolerant and harmonious relationship.

In most of Ratna's stories the state has a crucial role in victimising its citizens. In *Lemah Tanjung*, for example, it is the state that endangers the lives of its citizens by destroying the only green area in the city, and it is also the state's racial policy that endangers and marginalises the life of people like Paul. After the resignation of Soeharto, subsequent presidents (Habibie, Wahid and Megawati) introduced new regulations allowing Chinese to practice their traditions: such as publishing books and newspapers in Chinese, freely learning and speaking

Chinese in public, and celebrating Chinese holidays. Since then, Chinese culture has appeared more and more in Indonesian cultural life. Most importantly, with the abolition of official discrimination against the Chinese, it is expected that everyday discrimination against the Chinese will gradually disappear and the Chinese will live their lives more easily and be fully assimilated within society. Whether or not anti-Chinese sentiment will totally disappear from the Indonesian mind, only time will tell. The politics of belonging is an on-going process, which requires the engagement of all societal elements, and it flourishes only in conducive environments.

Through her narratives Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim presents women who challenge meta-narratives, which write them out of the social and cultural present. Her narratives question the social, political, cultural, and religious placement of women, and at the same time demonstrate the ways that women manage to construct their own identities. Her writing functions as a vital weapon in attacking the injustices that most women in Indonesia – particularly in rural areas – experience, because of the autocratic power exercised by the state and the influence of patriarchy. In investigating the relationship between domestic and local sources of oppression of women, and exposing the dangers of women's invisibility in their social and cultural lives, Ratna's writing makes women visible. Bringing the body discourse into fiction is crucial as it elevates reader's awareness that body politics can be a channel to question received gender construction. Ratna's stories constantly insist on women's rights to claim a place in the annals of their people, while at the same time arguing that the various women she captures in her stories are not of a single identity, but of many possible speaking positions. Ratna attempts to understand, then challenge, women's positioning in cultural, social and political constellations.

6 Representation, Identity and Religion: Images of Muslim Women, Their Lives and Struggles in Fiction (Part II)

Abidah El Khalieqy and Her Feminist Project

Raising general awareness about issues concerning women and Islam can be channelled through numerous ways, including book publication. Abidah El Kahieqy is famous for her engagement in disseminating awareness of the rights of women within the bounds of Islamic values. Her short stories and novel are commonly perceived as promoters of Muslim women's authenticity, intellectual ownership, identity and struggle within their community, in order to advocate equality for women in a male-dominated world. Her stories are largely against the background of *pesantren,* which may be regarded as a subculture of Islam, particularly within Javanese settings. Abidah is a Muslim activist who imbues her writing with a strong advocacy for rights of Muslim women: the rights of her body in relation to reproduction, the rights to education, the rights to social and economic resources, and to political power. Most importantly, she also addresses problems of gender inequality arising out of male-biased interpretations of religion. For Abidah, religion is an essential component of life: one of the pertinent factors contributing to her identity and social role. The following discussion attempts to examine Abidah's narratives, which navigate identifications with a common purpose: that is, her narrative voices calling for justice and freedom. In developing awareness and stimulating public discourse about women's rights, and which issues are precisely relevant in contemporary Indonesian Islam, Abidah's works are highly influential.

Muslim Women and Their Rights

Abidah's *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (Woman with a Sorban Necklace) was published in 2001. The publication of this novel was partly funded by Yayasan Kesejahteraan Fatayat (YKF), Yogyakarta, and the Ford Foundation (FF). It is stated in the introductions from both YKF and FF that the novel seeks to educate readers on women's rights, especially reproduction and education rights within the tenets of Islam. In

this novel Abidah clearly depicts her feminist project, often defined as Islamic feminism.

The novel strongly articulates women's demands for equality with men. The title itself suggests that the positioning of women is always confined within limitations produced by men. *Perempuan berkalung sorban* literally means a woman who is wearing *sorban* as her necklace. *Sorban* is the headdress worn only by male Muslims. Metaphorically, the title signifies prescribed relations between men and women: their social positions in Islamic society where religious interpretations play as constructions formulating those relations and positions.

Education Rights

The story focuses on the life of Nisa, the shorter name for Annisa Nuhayyah, meaning an intelligent woman.[1] Nisa is the daughter of KH. Hanan Abdul Malik, a famous *kyai*, the head of a *Pondok Pesantren Putri* (*pesantren* for girls). As the only daughter, it is understood that Nisa will be her father's successor in heading the *pesantren*: nowadays it is common for *pesantren putri* to be headed by ibu *nyai*, the wife, or the daughter, of a *kyai*. However, Nisa doesn't see herself living only within the *pesantren* walls, she desires to seek knowledge beyond the *pesantren* walls and she often mingles with the village children outside the *pesantren*. Nisa is raised in a patriarchal world where the sexual division of labour is seen to be natural. At school she reads materials supportive of this division: within the family the father is the breadwinner working in an office; the mother is in charge of domestic duties; the son plays in the yard, and the daughter helps her mother in the household.[2] Abidah displays her criticism of Indonesian formal education, especially of the elementary level where the ideology of the sexual division of labour is persistently reinforced; gender hierarchy is maintained by propagating such representation and roles. Domestic ideology becomes a powerful means to strengthen the patriarchal domination through such teachings.

The protagonist of the story, Nisa, intends to break all the constraining walls, which limit women in their social roles. She wants to grow up having male roles rather than female roles, because this will provide her with more control in the public sphere. Nisa's status as a daughter is symbolic. All women are daughters, but not all are wives and mothers. Nisa's daughterhood acts as a representation of all women, because it shows that all women can be oppressed, but at the same time it also shows that daughters can respond to unjust situations and demand their rights as though they were sons. Nisa's close relationship with her distant relative *Lek* Khudhori (Uncle Khudhori) contributes

greatly to her striving for gender equality. From Khudhori, the young Nisa learns about the equality and justice that Islam ideally brings to its adherents. Khudhori satisfies Nisa's thirst for knowledge about women's history in Islam:

> I was more and more yearning to learn *qira'ah* [to recite the Qur'an beautifully] and horse-back riding. I did them all with high spirit though secretly. (...) I spent all my free time exercising for horse-back riding, listening to the stories of the Prophet's wives, the forgotten queens of Islam and stories of female Sufis from *Lek* Khudori.[3]

The passage above well illustrates Nisa's desire for education beyond domesticity. Her dream is to imitate Aisyah, the Prophet's youngest wife, who led an army in the Battle of Camel. Although Aisyah led the losing side, the fact that she led indeed captivated the young girl. For Nisa, Aisyah's heroism, and her ability to lead an army of men, conjures up images of an earlier Islam where women were given greater space in public life. Within these images Nisa sees women's authenticity.

Not only does Nisa have an early education in the history of early Muslim women, she also has an interest in literature and poetry. Khudhori often recites the poems of famous poets, in particular those of Jalaluddin Rumi. Nisa often writes her own poems and sends them to Khudhori who is away at Al-Azhar, Cairo, for tertiary education. Imagination is a powerful ally for Nisa's struggles. It enables her to create her own interpretations and thus fill the gaps in the collective memory of Islamic tradition, which, by and large, erases the presence of female Muslims in history. She begins her own interpretations at an early age when critically assessing *Sura At-Takwir* on female infanticide in pre-Islamic Quraishi culture:

> How could they be called fathers? Or is it what they really are? Burying baby girls alive? Who then are their mothers? Who are their wives? Aren't they women themselves? Why don't they bury their wives alive as well? Sometimes I feel that father doesn't really love me. [Is it] because I am a girl?[4]

From an early age Nisa criticises the gender hierarchy that discriminates against girls in her environment, because of their sex. Her most essential effort is to defy her worst enemy – patriarchal domination – and achieve justice and equality. She persistently maintains her goal: to obtain her freedom. 'Women are not men's servants. Nor are they slaves of life. I don't want to be a slave.'[5]

Nisa's struggles are not without challenge. Soon after her graduation from elementary school at the age of twelve, she is forced into marriage with Samsudin, the son of a famous *kyai*. Forced marriage and child marriage are another form of subordination that Nisa has to undergo. Her struggle to be an autonomous body must necessarily be punished, as it deviates from the religious and social norms of the *pesantren* world. Samsudin, who is considered the black sheep of his family, comes from a devout *santri* family. He is a promiscuous young man, incapable of the upstanding behaviour expected of a *santri* gentleman. The narrative paints him as a monster: he abuses Nisa, and frequently rapes her when she does not desire sexual intercourse. When Nisa protests about Samsudin's immoral behaviour to her family, they simply tell her that it is her responsibility to change him into a better person. Nisa is sacrificed and punished for attempting to have her own autonomy.

For Nisa, education is her way to cope with this unjust treatment. She focuses only on her education and ignores Samsudin's misbehaviour. Samsudin is outraged that Nisa ignores him and soon brings a woman, Kalsum, home as his second wife. Kalsum is a widow and far older than Samsudin. Although it is perhaps unusual for wives to share the same house in Indonesia, it sometimes happens in *pesantren*s. Samsudin's polygamous marriage is a relief for Nisa, as it releases her from her responsibilities as a wife: she accepts this practice gladly. She can now concentrate more on her education, because Kalsum, being her helpful ally, takes over Nisa's responsibility for managing the household and fulfilling Samsudin's sexual needs. Kalsum also gives him a daughter, Fadillah. Here, Abidah gives polygamy a new face. The dynamics of polygamy is presented very well when Abidah uses it as a useful ally for Nisa in seeking her self-empowerment. As in Titis' story, *Dia*, Abidah's depiction of polygamy becomes a significant means for women's improvement. Because Samsudin takes a second wife, Nisa can finish her education. However, Kalsum is also Samsudin's victim: his promise of material luxury, which seduced her, is a lie. A bond between Nisa and Kalsum is established when Kalsum shows interest in Nisa's education, and asks Nisa to be her mentor on issues concerning women and Islam: sisterhood emerges between the victimised women. Their bond is their response to an external threat, as they remember events they come together in sorrow. And through Nisa's teaching Kalsum they establish a sense of collective identity.

Education is centralised within this story. Lack of education is an essential contributing factor in women's victimisation. Kalsum's lack of education, not knowing her rights as a wife, makes her an easy target for Samsudin's violence. Nisa's young age and her high school education are inadequate for her to fight back against Samsudin's violence.

Abidah shows that within a *santri* family marriage, which is commonly perceived to be closest to Islamic ideals, domestic violence can take place. Abidah further questions gender bias in relation to the wife's responsibilities regulated in *kitab kuning* and taught in *pesantren*. At school Nisa is taught that a wife will be cursed if she refuses her husband's desire for sexual intercourse. However, in her explanation to Kalsum on this matter, Nisa critically rebuffs such teaching, saying that it is heavily drawn for men's benefit, and intentionally neglects women's own words about it. Nisa believes women's feelings need to be taken into account: is she prepared? Does she want to? For Nisa, a husband's imposition of intercourse when the wife refuses is clearly an act of rape. However, Nisa's knowledge means nothing, because she has no power to stop Samsudin's violence: she is too young and too scared to defy her husband. Nisa's young age and Kalsum's ignorance indeed make them perfect allies for subjugation.

As Abidah vocalises her discontent with child marriage and polygamy, these seemingly perpetual problems Indonesian women have to deal with, she illustrates the hostile conditions in which women have to live. Abidah even goes further, saying that child marriage is largely due to patriarchal manipulation of what is termed *ijbar* in Islamic *shari'a*. This is where a Muslim girl is subjected to the over-ruling power, or *ijbar,* of her father or guardian, supposedly in the interests of the girl herself. Through the story of Nisa, Abidah critically assesses *ijbar*. How could a girl twelve years of age know her own interest, particularly in the choice of husband? The most common interpretation of *ijbar* is when the father, or a guardian, asks a girl whether she approves of a certain person and if she keeps silent this means she agrees with the father's (or guardian's) choice. This is Nisa's experience. Her silence when she is asked, which shows her ignorance, is simply perceived as her agreement. Through the voice of Nisa's uncle, Khudhori, Abidah criticises *ijbar,* because she believes that it is entirely against the spirit of autonomy in Islam. *Ijbar* should be located within certain contexts and conditions, it was never meant to be monolithically applicable to all circumstances.

Upon her graduation from high school at the age of seventeen and encouraged by Khudhori who has returned from Egypt and Germany, Nisa finally agrees to speak about Samsudin's abuse to her parents. When matters are settled between her family and Samsudin's, she files for divorce. Being a young divorcee, she is subjected to public prejudice, in particular about her close relation to Khudhori. However, determined to start a new life and pursue higher education, Nisa leaves her hometown for university education in Yogyakarta. A year later she marries Khudhori. Her second marriage is her escape from her *janda* status, because she cannot bear the prejudicial societal treatment: with

her marriage to Khudhori, who is a lecturer in Islamic studies, these prejudices soon disappear. Nisa gains what she has struggled for. Her activism on women's issues within an Islamic perspective is supported by her Khudhori and she becomes a strong supporter of the women's movement. Her feminist project is to provide equality and justice for women who are subjugated through patriarchal domination, her own experience. Her marriage to Khudhori is an ideal one, each supporting the other in creating *sakinah mawaddah wa-rahmah* family (a harmonious, peaceful and affectionate family). When their son Mahbub is one year old, Khudhori dies in a car accident. It is rumoured that Samsudin is responsible for the hit and run accident, which kills Khudhori, but the truth is never revealed in the story. Nisa herself believes that life and death are in the hands of the Creator. The death of Khudhori is a significant device in the story, for it reminds the readers that the kind of family life that Nisa and Khudhori have exists only at an ideal level.[6]

Nisa's struggle for education is not an easy struggle, but Nisa pursues education despite her circumstances. She is iconic, because she attempts to formulate interpretations of Islam within the perspectives of women's experiences. In this story women become the central social actors: first subjugated then empowered, Abidah moves women's social position from the periphery to the centre. She advocates women's rights within Islam, and within the contexts of Islamic teaching, and highlights domestic violence, because it is often believed to be non-existent in Islamic reality. She creates a heroine who portrays a course of action that constantly resists gender bias and who refuses to play the role of a slave victimised by patriarchy. The role of education sets the central theme of the text. In addition to her explicit opinions on child and forced marriage, polygamy, and domestic violence, Abidah emphasises the significance of education in resisting oppression based on conservative Islamic teachings. For Abidah, education functions as a means of psychological independence; freeing women from oppression and providing room for emancipation. It is a reverberating call against certain traditional practices, such as child and forced marriage, and polygamy.

Reproduction Rights

As part of their responsibilities as the vicegerents on earth, Muslims are adjured to ensure the survival of the human race through reproduction conducted through sexual relationships regulated within the sanction of marriage. Women, with their sole ability to bear children are then central, for they are the linking entity of the past and the future.

Humankind relies on women's bodies to secure the existence of future generations. However, in a society like Indonesia where religious teaching regarding the power of a husband over a wife is very strong, a woman's right over her own body is significantly disregarded. Her ownership and reproduction rights are denied, because the ability to control her own reproductive behaviour reeks of self-determination and freedom from male authority – anathema to men in most societies, let alone Indonesia. Women's reproductive health is, by and large, dismissed from male politics.

Although recent developments have shown that many NGOs and women's organisations are now strongly addressing reproduction rights, according to UNICEF the maternal mortality rate and lifetime risk of maternal death are still high, because of the poor handling of women's reproductive health.[7] To make matters worse, numerous aspects of women's reproduction rights have intentionally been neglected by the state, for example, abortion and infertility.[8] Blackburn argues that it is difficult for women who fall pregnant against their will to secure an abortion, because there is no consensus on the issue. Religious objections create more difficulties for the state to sanction abortion based on women's needs. Infertility is another problematic matter. With infertility problems the blame is simply placed on the woman, rather than on men, without really knowing the cause.[9] In addition, despite the fact that leukorrhea,[10] commonly known as *keputihan*, can be a vital symptom of dangerous reproductive diseases, such as sexually transmitted diseases, the Ministry of Health fails to classify it as needing urgent attention.[11]

The lack of women's awareness on the notion of 'woman's body woman's rights' also contributes greatly to the failure to implement women's reproduction rights. There is very little discourse about, or attention given to, the subject. Religion is probably the most significant reason for this lack of attention. Traditional interpretations of Islam view women as half of men, and a woman's body is owned by the male lineage, exemplified exclusively with the *ijbar* right when she is single, and her husband's control when she is married. A wife is subject to her husband's responsibility, thus control over her body and integrity is in the hands of her husband. Who is the owner of a woman's body is certainly problematic. The notion of 'woman's body woman's rights' implicates authority, and the right for women to control their bodies, sexuality and reproductive organs: for most men, this will definitely jeopardise their control over women.

Issues of reproduction rights are also presented strongly in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. The novel is included amongst the few books published in Indonesia from 1990-2003 which are said to cover 'all issues concerning women's reproduction rights and women's reproduc-

tive health, including violent acts and violations of women's rights."[12] The story translates the issues of reproduction rights from social and cultural approaches within the context of the *pesantren* world. Abidah's fictionalisation of these issues proves to be more powerful and influential than if they were represented in more clinical terms, as the story relates to the life and experiences of many women. It articulates women's own concerns, and turns their concerns into an informative teaching method, for instance, when Nisa tells her relative, *Lek* Ummi (Aunt Ummi) about women's reproduction rights:

> Caring for children is the husband's responsibility. (...) Also, for example if *Lek* Ummi refuses to breastfeed the baby because the household load is too heavy, *Lek* Mahmud [*Lek* Ummi's husband] is obligated to find a surrogate mother whom he'll pay well enough. These are the husband's responsibility, *Lek*. (...) You mean, you don't know if you have the right to decide whether you want to get pregnant or not, *Lek*?[13]

Abidah's story covers important reproduction rights issues: domestic responsibilities are to be shared by both husband and wife; the wife has the right to her body; she has the right to decide whether to have a baby. On other occasions, Abidah, through the voice of Nisa, speaks of a wife's right to initiate and enjoy sexual intercourse with her husband. Although this might seem odd to most Indonesian Muslims, as only men may initiate sexual relations, Abidah directly voices her feminist rhetoric on the issue of sexual rights, always bearing in mind that sexual relationships are only to take place within marriage.

Indeed reproduction rights are not new in Islamic law. Classical books on *fiqh* have regulated such issues ranging from sexual relations to childbearing. According to K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, classical religious interpretations of such rights place women at the centre.[14] Verses in the Qur'an secure these rights: husbands are responsible to treat their wives with respect, and women, due to their childbearing ability, deserve to receive respectful treatment.[15] Islam says that because of their so-called reproduction burden, women are given exemption in their vicegerent responsibilities, particularly in the matter of *ibadah* (worshipping). However, Kyai Sahal reminds us that the practicality of those verses is far from ideal in most Muslim communities. Women's reproduction rights often exist only on a rhetorical level, and are never actually applied at the practical level. Efforts to raise women's awareness of their reproduction rights are still needed to finally reach the ideal goal of just and equal Islamic communities.

Gender-Based Violence: Domestic Violence

In her novel, Abidah also raises one of the most contemporary issues that Muslim feminists struggle against: violence against women. To a certain degree, most female characters in the story suffer from gender-based violence, whether direct or indirect, physical or mental. Exposing marital rape, a term only recently used by the Muslim feminist movement, is Abidah's attack on patriarchal subjugation. Nisa, her co-wife Kalsum, her relative *Lek* Ummi, and even her mother, reflect many Muslim women who are taught that anytime a husband wants sexual intercourse with his wife, even if she is not ready, or willing, his wife should never refuse. The practice has long been uncritically accepted due to an interpretation of a Qur'anic verse, which states that a husband has 'the right' to beat his wife if she is found to be *nusyuz* (disobedient).[16] *Nusyuz* has long been subject to debate in Islamic communities. Conservative interpretations believe that this verse endorses a husband to be the sole controller and owner of his wife, including the right to 'punish' her in the case of *nusyuz*. Modern and gender-equal interpretations of this term demand contextual readings of this verse. If it is not to be abolished, just like the abolition of slavery, *nusyuz* is only applicable under special conditions. Hussein Muhammad reasons that most violence against women in Muslim societies is basically an extension of this verse.[17] Therefore, it is against the Islamic ideals of protecting the five basic human rights in the perspective of modern interpretations of Islam: rights to practice religion, to live, to think, to reproduction and to possession of property.[18] Hussein Muhammad argues further that theological dogma, which says that man's authority over woman is natural, needs to be reformed and reconstructed in order to be more gender equal, which is indeed the basic of Islamic ideals. Marriage is a contract based on equality and justice, and relations between husband and wife are not to be based on hierarchical power-relations.

The fact that Abidah addresses gender-based violence in her novel is indeed crucial, because many studies conducted by NGOs on women's issues have shown that the reporting of gender-based violence, especially domestic violence, has increased due to the rise in awareness of such issues. Rifka Annisa, an NGO specialising in women's issues in Yogyakarta, recently published its research on domestic violence in Central Java. Its findings are noteworthy, because they show that domestic violence, whether physical, sexual or emotional, which was previously perceived to be non-existent was suffered by many women in the research area.[19] Violence from a partner was the most common form of domestic violence:

> Women are at the greatest risk of violence from their husbands; one in every four women in our sample had been sexually or physically abused by a partner. Sexual violence was more common than physical violence, with one in five women reporting sexual violence (i.e., being forced to have sex against their will by ensuing physical force or threats), whereas one in ten women experienced physical violence from a husband at some point in their lives.[20]

On the 14th of September 2004, the Indonesian government enacted *Undang-Undang* No. 23 tahun 2004 called as *Undang-Undang Penghapusan Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga* (PKDRT – Abolition of Domestic Violence Act). This act aims to give legal protection to women from violence occurring within domestic walls. However, the act does not automatically guarantee a more women-friendly environment. The Javanese idea of harmony might hamper the implementation of this act. Many female victims of partner violence are still reluctant to report their suffering, because Javanese ethics, reinforced by traditional Islamic interpretations of women's duties, emphasise harmony within the family at all costs. Women are burdened with their duty to be loyal to their husbands even though their well-being is at stake, and many women choose silence over reporting violence to the police for the sake of a harmonious household.[21] Indonesian women, irrespective of ethnic, religious, cultural or social backgrounds, are all at risk of being victimised by domestic violence, and some cultural and religious norms even encourage a tolerant attitude to gender-based violence, as well as encouraging silence in the face of abuse.

Abidah's *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* remarkably raises these issues in the context of women and Islam, placing such issues at the heart of women's everyday life. In a rather blatant manner, Abidah writes about previously taboo issues, such as marital rape and domestic violence. She brings them to public notice and, transparently, seeks to educate her readers, hoping that they will come to understand that any violence is intolerable. That any violence in the name of Islam is un-Islamic: this is the awareness that Abidah hopes to create.

Geni Jora and the Global Woman

Abidah's most recent publication, *Geni Jora* (Jora's Fire, 2004),[22] was the runner-up in the 2003 novel writing competition held by the Jakarta Arts Council. Acclaimed by many critics, this story reflects one girl's global journey in the search and struggle for justice. In this story, Abidah, who is now often labelled the 'Nawal el Sadaawi of Indonesia' por-

trays the journey of a girl named Jora (the short version of Kejora, meaning the brightest star), the daughter of a famous *kyai*, moving between the *pesantren* world in East Java to regions in the Middle East and northern parts of Africa.

As in her previous work, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, in this novel Abidah also uses the I as the narrator, presenting her story in a frank manner so that the reader can easily grasp its message. Abidah believes that literary writing should not merely revolve around the oddity of the imaginary world; rather, it should focus on its role to enlighten its readers with a strong mission and vision.[23] Departing from her former works, this novel is written in diary form, creating an autobiographical power of truth and authenticity. Here, the autobiographical mode of writing gives this novel a significant agenda of recording female experience, bringing female existence to the heart of self-representation and self-disclosure. In offering a fictional autobiographical diary, Abidah raises Jora's subjectivity, giving her a role as the bearer of collective social memory. Memory is then Abidah's closest ally in Jora's self-narration. In the novel, Abidah continuously moves between the past and the present, between 1993 Marrakech, 1982 East Java, 1992 Damascus, 1993 Amman and 1993 East Java. The time movement does not develop in a conventional linear manner: Abidah jumps easily between times, between regions, between spacio-temporality. Jora is positioned as a speaker writing her own self within the constituency of selfhood and story telling. As Sidonie Smith posits:

> [Autobiographical writing] becomes both the process and the product of assigning meaning to a series of experiences, after they have taken place, by means of emphasis, juxtaposition, commentary, omission. (...) an interpretation of life that invests the past and the 'self' with coherence and meaning that may not have been evident before the act of writing itself. The very language she uses to name herself is simultaneously empowering and vitiating since words cannot capture the full sense of being and narratives explode in multiple directions of their own.[24]

Jora's writing signifies her self-interpretation within the constant movement of social memory, revealing personal, social, cultural and intellectual histories. Her profound concern is selfhood, for the process of self-reading and self-writing facilitates relationships between historical contexts and individual circumstances, the socio-cultural construction of gender and cultural ideologies of the collective memory presented by the writer. With her autobiographical writing, she mixes fiction and fact, past and present and the personal and the public. Moreover, she

offers stories that construct her ideology of selfhood and self-definition, rendering a woman's story as the story of speaking and empowerment: in opposition to male-defined culture, which forms a woman's story as a story of silence, powerlessness and self-effacement. Jora's self-writing becomes a strategic move, opening up a space where Jora, as a subject of history writing her own story, at the same time positions herself as an agent of discourse, and engages in a dialogue with herself as historical subject and discursive agent. Modes of interaction between the personal and the political are thus created, and metaphors give her narrative significance within the larger social and historical spheres in which she lives.

Education and Travel

In *Geni Jora*, Abidah also moves beyond geographical constraints, she portrays Jora as a global woman, a transnational body whose journey marks both her physical and intellectual journey to freedom and justice. In the same manner as for Gita in Ratna's *Lemah Tanjung*, travel functions as an important formation of Muslim identity. In Jora's journey to Algeria, Jordan, Syria and Morocco she seeks knowledge, and continues her education at a global level. In so doing, she is working toward a gender's redefinition of what constitutes a 'global Muslim woman', and challenges contemporary discourses on gender and Islam.

Education is the key theme in this novel. The story of Jora revolves around her educational experiences from the *pesantren* world in East Java to the Middle East and North African regions. The theme of female education in this novel requires consideration within the contexts of both modern and traditional educational environments. In the *pesantren* world, Jora is taught a system of Islamic education that has long existed in Indonesian Islam: a methodology that emphasises the importance of acquiring Qur'anic knowledge and upholding Islamic traditions. Nevertheless, the *pesantren* that Jora attends for her early education has both Islamic and secular schools of thought. The role of Jora as a global educated Muslim female indeed becomes a core element in the text's reflection of Islamic feminism in Indonesian Islam. In the character of Jora Abidah shows a type of liberal progression as she moves away from the more classical Muslim female stereotypes, such as in the characters of Nisa and Kalsum in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. Although Nisa does enjoy the privilege of having a tertiary education, the traditional attitude towards female education still is to consider it unwise to invest in female education, given that women get married young anyway. The novel, because it is written in an autobiographical manner, results in a new depth and complexity in character

development. Abidah takes an introspective look at the thought process of the protagonist, Jora, closely examining her struggles and subsequent choices.

In Jora's opinion her name sounds more like 'juara', meaning champion. Since early childhood, she had created herself as the smartest student who desires only to win, not lose. Jora understands completely that only through education she can draw her life story:

> I opened hundreds of pages, thousands, millions, even billions of pages of the world's books, eternal books and speeches, lectures of teachers, *uztads* and lecturers. As a student, as a *santriwati*, I sat facing each of them. I listened and focused my sight. I absorbed knowledge with my brain and my *fuad* [heart]. I chewed it as the nutrition of my life.[25]

For Jora, knowledge is her nutrition for life. Jora, as did Nisa, develops the ability to *ijtihad*, and critically assesses the lessons she was taught at school.

Abidah's portrayal of the *pesantren* world provides a realistic investigation of the life behind the *pesantren* walls. She demystifies the notion of sacredness that all *santri*s or *santriwati*s must be necessarily pious and chaste. The *pesantren* world in Abidah's eyes is parallel to any other world. It is at risk of moral corruption just like any other world. Similar to any single-sex school, *pesantren* cannot radically escape from juvenile delinquency, such as group misbehaviour, theft and even lesbianism. In her story Abidah attacks the notion of *pesantren* piety with descriptions of peer-group pressures common in the teenage world:

> For almost four years, their [Detty's gang] misbehaviours have not been handled by *majelis taklim*. (...) Dissimilar from Detty's gang, Sonya's gang is more barbaric and defiant. Two of them were punished (...) because of lesbianism. One of them was punished because of stealing.[26]

In the story, lesbianism, previously denied as occurring in the *pesantren* world, is brought into public view. Abidah's, protagonist, Jora, calls the immoral conduct and immoral influences within the *pesantren* a *kanker* (cancer), which is destructive to other students coming to seek knowledge and religious piety. Abidah shows that the world of the *pesantren* can be manipulated to function as a correctional facility and rehabilitation centre for teenagers whose parents can no longer control their children's misbehaviour, which sometimes results in unwanted pregnancies and juvenile delinquency. This is harsh criticism of such a religious institution, but Abidah develops it in her story as something vio-

lating the ideals of Islamic education for the sake of financial benefits, because parents of troublesome teenagers are willing to pay to transfer the responsibility to educate their children into the hands of the *pesantren*. She clearly shows that the *pesantren* is not an exclusive world immune from moral corruption: it cannot escape from internal or external change.

Time is also an essential part of the story. In the social production of memory (and in *Geni Jora* this is done through autobiographical writing), the past is negotiated continuously, and memories are made and remade. Social memory is not just the property of individuals, although their life stories contribute to it; rather, it is a complex cultural and historical phenomenon in which individuals are shaped. Childhood stories often represent a mythical, autonomous, more poetical and sometimes utopian world. Jora's narration of her childhood life suggests a memory of many childhoods: it implies a dysfunctional reality; an inclusion of historical incursions and conflicts, resentments and struggles rather than a pre-adolescent idyll. She and her elder sister Lola (nickname for Bianglala, meaning rainbow), were constantly reminded during their childhood that girls and women were not to fight back against men: they had to relinquish their rights when they conflicted with men's rights. Her grandmother always told Jora that no matter how smart she was, in reality man was still primary, and woman would always be positioned under man.[27]

As a *peranakan* Arab (a descendant of Arab and indigenous Indonesians) Jora remembers her childhood as living in a 'harem': she, Lola, and Prahara their brother, were the children of a second wife; her stepmother – her father's first wife, was childless. Jora learns about Arabic queens, who were powerful and empowered, from her stepmother's bedtime stories. Living in a 'harem' Jora and Lola are isolated from other children in the neighbourhood, because only Prahara is allowed to play outside the house walls. In the story Jora's objection to polygamy becomes stronger because of how unhappy her mother is, and how heavily burdened she is with domestic responsibilities. The first wife, however, enjoys the privilege of a more public role. It is from witnessing the injustice her mother has to suffer that the search for justice becomes Jora's strongest motivation in life. Jora is faced both with discrimination and violence whilst growing up. Both Jora and Lola are the targets of their uncle's attempted rape: a secret they keep to themselves, for if their father found out he would certainly put the blame on them and not on their uncle, his younger brother.

Jora realises that she will need to be man's equal to enable her to attack male domination, and this can only be achieved through education, personal power, *mandiri* (independence) and, most importantly, by holding on to the strong belief that men and women were created

equal: 'the ideal that Islam taught *Kafa'ah*. *Sama*. *Sederajat* [equal].'[28] Jora grows up aspiring to autonomy and freedom, and also with a strong faith. Her boyfriend Zakky, the son of a famous *kyai* says:

> You are consistent with your belief. Your inspiration is free and you walk upon a strong foothold, do not easily drift away, not even by the storm of pleasure. Even besides your lover, you look very independent. From you I hear the holy verses [of the Qur'an] in a fresh way. Very different.[29]

In the process of becoming autonomous Jora tests not only her intellectual capacity, but also her mental and physical abilities. Her ability to speak English and Arabic paves the way for her to be the executor of her own agency and gives her a strong hold on her own subjectivity.

Faith and struggle are the core of Jora's identity. Constantly she reminds the reader of the words of the Prophet: '*Inna hayaata aqiidatun wa jihaadun*' (indeed your life is *aqidah* [generally meaning Islamic creed] and *jihad* [here meaning struggle]). Jora balances her faith and worldly responsibilities. In a similar way to Titis' characters, her strong faith is manifested in religious submission. Her actions are based on religious conviction, and her diary is full of verses quoted from the Qur'an. Her *jihad* is her struggle to achieve equality and justice. The witty and smart Jora is a contemporary heroine who dares to demystify the myth of female defeat, oppression, weakness, ignorance and disempowerment.[30] She is the antibook to such derogatory myths:

> No single stain remaining from the old and rusty myths. That woman is a garbage bin of defeat, oppression, weakness, ignorance and disempowerment. This is the second phase of living an enthusiastic life: living in a free world when rebellion has achieved its peak. It produces no waste. And there is no eternal injustice. It always gives birth to rebels of various types and models. And I think destroying injustice is done by placing a mirror in front of the protagonist. Give him the exact shadow of his action. In this chaotic milieu, apology no longer has the power to revolt. (...) when desire to power is the only goal, what is expected of an apology? Nothing. Just disillusion. Thus, if you are hit on your nose, hit them back with similar power.[31]

Jora is revolutionary. She seeks equality and believes in 'an eye for an eye'. Apologies mean nothing to her: they are just words. Action is the only way to fight any unjust discriminative practice.

Abidah's works can be regarded as serving a broad-minded and progressive gender-*jihad*: a *jihad* that brings stable structures of ideal jus-

tice and equality. The fiercest criticism of Abidah comes because of her supposed attack on cultural traditions – local or national, and on traditional interpretations of Islamic principles. Abidah and other female Muslim writers would agree that their writings challenge certain cultural and religious norms, which are detrimental to female rights. Forced marriage, for example, is largely believed to be a religiously endorsed practice. Abidah's views come from her close reading of Islamic sources, and from her ethical motivation as a Muslim. It is from this that she authenticates her claim that female rights to education are equal to male's and are sanctioned by both the Qur'an and *hadith*, and that both sources of Islamic principles furthermore authorise education in securing the role of Muslims, female and male, to be vicegerents on the earth. Faith facilitates the spiritual and moral development of Muslims, and it continuously articulates that knowledge will expand their intellectual capacity. But, faith alone will not accommodate the ideal role of vicegerency. Exemplified by Aisyah, female Muslims have long consumed scholarship and knowledge, and contributed to the economic, cultural and political progress of Muslim communities. Female education is not an anomaly within Islamic tradition; it must, therefore, be aspired to and highly prized, and shared equally between both sexes.

The notion of 'seclusion' for women is strongly challenged by Abidah with her presentation of female characters that consistently defy physical and spatial restrictions through their attainment of university degrees and the pursuit of professional careers. Abidah reinterprets the notion of female seclusion, in order to maintain female chastity, in the light of contemporary situations. In her view, seclusion must not be a-historical or a-political. Abidah uses characters such as Nisa and Jora to prove that contemporary Muslim women can work outside their homes without losing their chastity. They adhere to their faith, but at the same time parallel their faith with present sociological conditions. Abidah may indeed be a harsh critic of discriminative and unjust practices in the name of Islam, yet her perspectives are justified in the Qur'an and *hadith*. Abidah's feminist agenda, projected through her writing, is to promote female rights, but also to balance the sociological and theological in order to give norms flexible perspectives regarding Islamic teachings. In this way Islam can face the challenges presented by social change, while still reflecting the transcendental essence of Islamic ideals.

Helvy Tiana Rosa and Her War Stories

UNICEF figures show that the number of IDPs (internally displaced persons) in Indonesia is around 1.4 million, with the majority being

women and children. This substantial number was mostly driven by 'conflict and violence across the archipelago [that] harmed and traumatised and displaced children and women on a massive scale.'[32] However, the massive scale of the problem does not automatically mean that in day-to-day reality it receives much attention or is accorded an urgently needed remedy. The problems are almost too complex for many Indonesians to face. For this reason, the causes of the displacement of IDPs are at risk of being undocumented within the nation's historiography.

The most discussed violence against women is the May 1998 rapes of ethnic-Chinese women. In this political turmoil, at least 138 rape cases were recorded in Jakarta over a two-day period (13th and 14th May).[33] The disclosure of this tragedy by human rights activists was a shock, because many people denied that such violence was possible in Indonesia.[34] The fact that problems in conflict areas receive such little attention may result from the SARA policy of the Soeharto regime (see Chapter Seven), where the slogan was used by the state apparatus to severely restrict public discussion about problems of difference: racial, ethnic or religious. Further, as conflict in these areas has occurred over a long period, public attention tends to diminish. Although immediately after the collapse of Soeharto's authority in 1998 conflict areas received much more attention, as Indonesians always say: '*jamur di musim hujan*' (mushrooms in rainy season), it only exists for a very short time. In the minds of the Indonesian public today, such conflicts only take shape in generality: there is hardly any acknowledgement of the writing of the experiences of people who suffered violence in these areas. Perhaps people are sceptical, for, despite the many efforts to find solutions to the violence, attainments are few. Or, perhaps, as Melani Budianta writes: 'In the immediate aftermath of the waves of violence in Indonesia in the last decade of the 20th century, many poets, artists and writers felt they had been stunned to silence. No words or image can give form to the shock, sorrow, anger, confusion, or disbelief at the scale of atrocity that human beings can affect on one another.'[35] Melani Budianta believes that it is the massive scale of the violence which silences people and stops its portrayal. Nonetheless, there are some writers who consistently tell, and therefore remind us, of such atrocities. One of those writers who dares to break the silence is Helvy Tiana Rosa. Helvy is a prolific short story writer and essayist whose works are laden with portrayals of violence against women in conflict areas where 'war is the ultimate result of conflict.'[36]

Helvy and her war stories may well function as a representation for silenced aspirations and local struggles. Through her war stories she raises several lines of questions central to the construction of self-reflexivity: questions about the forms of status and power that victimise

women and erode their subjectivity, and how women perceive violence and challenge that violence and their victimisation. These points are powerfully addressed in Helvy's stories. Helvy's stories might be classified as fictional, but they capture how women can challenge power and the violence perpetrated against them.

Armed Conflicts, State Violence and Women

Through her short story *Jaring Jaring Merah*[37] (The Red Net), Helvy scrupulously depicts the atrocities occurring in Aceh, the northern part of Sumatra, where the inhabitants are predominantly Muslim. Aceh is perhaps the most well-known conflict region in Indonesia. The area has a long history of social and political conflict. The class conflict of 1945, for example, divided the Acehnese between those supporting the *uleebalang* and those from other social-political groups, which the former believed had altered the social structures of the Acehnese. This was followed by the 1950s rebellion of the DI/TII – *Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia*, a separatist group that rebelled against the government of Indonesia and attempted to establish a separate state implementing only Islamic law. In 1966, like most parts of Indonesia, this region was also swept by the G30S/PKI rebellion where civilian forces, backed by the army and other military apparatuses, were in conflict with those accused of being communists. In 1976, Hasan Tiro announced the establishment of a new state, independent of Indonesia, called *Negara Aceh Merdeka*, but popularly known by the name of its military movement *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM Free Aceh Movement). Soeharto's government dealt repressively with the rebellion, which was stigmatised as a subversive crime against the authority of *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia* (NKRI – The Unitary Nation of the Republic of Indonesia). The government applied DOM (*Daerah Operasi Militer*, Military Operation Zone) in Aceh from 1988 until 1998.[38] Under DOM, Aceh became a killing ground: oppressive military rule was established, and the armed forces were the only authority recognised by the government. The implementation of DOM was closed from public eyes, but soon after the fall of Soeharto's regime the public was made aware of the atrocities in Aceh during the DOM implementation. The area is currently called *Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam* (NAD) – Aceh The State of Peace/ Islam), and the Islamic *shari'a* is implemented as the provincial law.

Helvy's *Jaring-jaring Merah*, acclaimed by the literary magazine *Horison* (Horizon) as one of the best stories in the past decade, is a written portraiture of brutality during the DOM implementation in Aceh. The story centres on a girl, Inong, who suffers mental trauma after witnes-

sing her whole family brutalised and murdered by the army. Inong's father, Zakaria, is accused of being a member of the GAM. His defence, that he is simply a *muadzin* (one who calls for prayer), is useless, and soldiers murder his wife and two sons and rape Inong, before shooting him. His house and others are burnt to the ground, and neighbours who attempt to help Zakaria and his family are either beaten to death or silenced. The trauma Inong experiences leads to her mental illness, yet, she is still capable of recognising her mental state:

> A long time ago, after my family was slaughtered and I was violated by several men, I felt like I had sunk into a deep muddy pit. I tried with all my might to pull myself up a bit, reaching out to the surface. But the pit had no boundaries. I couldn't lift myself up, or even touch anything, except all things that were bitter. I ate and drank anguish each day until I met Cut Dini and became a bird. Then everything seemed lighter.[39]

Cut Dini is Inong's caretaker and her friend, for everyone else in her neighbourhood abandons her through fear of more abuse from the army if they help. Inong's ability to cope with the violence perpetrated against her is her self-identification as a bird. A bird metaphorically signifies freedom, because with its wings it can fly free from any imprisonment. Inong sees herself as caught in a *jaring* (net), which she can escape by becoming a bird: imagining the freedom to fly and pretending mental illness are Inong's methods of coping with her trauma. Rape is perhaps one of the most common forms of violence against women in war times. A woman's body becomes the site of oppression and the signifier of male possession and power. The politics of the body, represented by the rape of Inong, dramatically exposes the intimate relationship between the female personal body and the theme of body politics in many women's writing. Through this story Helvy writes the history of the subjected and violated body. Inong's body functions simultaneously as a personal and political, psychological and ideological boundary of meaning, a contested border of self-possession and of transgression through which her subjectivity is subdued, yet able to challenge her oppressors through psychological pretension. The problematic of body-possession is central in this story. Despite the violence and brutality that Inong experiences in relation to her body, she finds ways to resist the kind of body pressed upon her through a politics of the body: she becomes a bird, a body-less female. A bird has no social or sexual identification to human society: it is not a culturally charged and classified body. By leaving her body behind, becoming a bird, Inong manages to survive, because the 'homelessness' of her body becomes her resistance to violence. Inong's body is marginalised

through rape, yet with her body-less self-identification she is able to engage in a process of critical self-consciousness through which she comes to an awareness of the relationship between her personal material body, and the cultural meanings assigned to her gendered body in body politics.

Helvy's story of the atrocities in Aceh during the DOM period is based on historical truth. Through the voice of Cut Dini, the NGO activist who looks after Inong, Helvy illustrates the state institutionalised violence, which is the primary cause of the brutality that Inong and others like her have experienced. When, after the fall of Soeharto, military officers ask Cut Dini to sign an agreement not to speak to strangers about the brutality suffered by Inong, she refuses:

> 'No! How about the rapes and tortures all this time, the slaughters at *rumoh geudong*, the scattered corpses at *Buket Tangkurak*, Jembatan Kuning, Sungai Tamiang, Cot Panglima, Hutan Krueng Campli... and other places!' Cut Dini raised her voice. 'And the village of three thousand widows, the neglected orphans (...) that heartless! No!'[40]

Cut Dini's refusal to be silenced about the cruelty of government and military oppression signifies women's struggle to recapture their stories, and become *agents provocateurs* infiltrating their voices into the nation's documented history. Their stories of violence and violation and the extreme state violence against its citizens, will be heard. There were mass murders of men accused of being supporters of the GAM, as a consequence thousands of women and children were left with no means of support. They were simply abandoned by the state. Many of these victims took refugee in the supposedly more secure refugee camps, yet here these IDPs faced another type of victimisation, as many camps are usually in poor conditions and lack food, clean water, health care, sanitary facilities and other social services.[41]

Similar stories take place in other conflict areas such as in Poso, Ambon, and Sambas. Armed conflicts and wars result only in sorrow and victimisation. Tabrani Yunus argues that indeed it is the 'patriarchal civilisation' that causes such conflicts, because conflicts are usually preceded by ideological or political disputes. Generally, only men are involved in the decision making of war, yet the most victimised are women and children, particularly those at the grassroots level with no ideological or political interests.[42] Julius Lawalata adds further that differences in religion, educational level, social status, culture and language do not contribute significantly to the effects of armed conflicts on women. Any armed conflict or any war will bring about similar violence to women: economic violence, health violence, and social vio-

lence. Economic violence is when their husband's death leaves women as single mothers with a double burden to support their family, because the state fails to provide enough economic support; health violence occurs with the poor conditions in the refugee camps; social violence is where women are at risk of sexual harassment in the refugee camps through a lack of privacy.[43] Another kind of violence elucidated by Lawalatta is where the state fails to provide security and stability, either socially or politically. Another interesting point raised by Lawalatta is the number of abandoned pregnant women in the conflict areas. Military men, who are stationed to help secure the areas, are often involved in relationships with local women, and when their tour of duty is over, many of them abandon these pregnant women.[44]

Exile versus Home

Poso on the island of Sulawesi, and Ambon in the Moluccas, are regions in Indonesia, though with different historical conditions, experiencing similar, so-called, religious conflict between Muslims and Christians. Labelling such conflict as religious conflicts is rather inappropriate, as difference in terms of religion does not automatically create conflict. In a multi-ethnic society such as Indonesia, differences of ethnicity and other ethnic identifiers, such as religion, have never been the source of conflict. Bertrand, in *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia* (2004), writes a remarkable analysis about the emergence of conflicts in Indonesia. He concludes:

> A complex mix of factors such as institutional incentives and threats, elite interests, and state policies shape the politicization and mobilization of ethnic identities. Although groups identify themselves in ethnic terms and differentiate themselves from other groups along a variety of ethnic identifiers, such as language, religion, or race, these differences are not a source of conflict. Rather, grievances arising from different statuses for groups, discrimination, exclusion, or differentiated access to political representation or economic resources are much more plausible factors in violent outcomes.[45]

From Bertrand's conclusion, it is obvious that discrimination and unequal economic distribution give rise to conflicts, which later develop and masquerade in religious difference. In looking specifically at the conflict in the Moluccas, Bertrand also concludes that different religions are never sources of conflicts in that area; rather, factors related

to institutional change are the initiators for creating religious conflicts. He argues:

> The ambiguity of the role of Islam in the Indonesian nation and patrimonial relations sustaining the New Order regime reinforce divisions between Christians and Muslims in Ambon and Maluku. The regime's policies and manipulative use of religion for political support had negative consequences, particularly since Dutch colonial policies had created a divide among the religious community.[46]

Bertrand further adds that the rapid transition to more democratic conditions also likely stirs up the violence. Democracy brings a whole new notion to the conception of the nation, and there is growing uncertainty on the part of individuals and groups about their positioning within new national structures.[47] Violence in Indonesia – be it ethnic or religious – cannot be categorised under one label. Bertrand shows that difference is not the problem. The problem is obviously injustice, marginalisation and inequality in distribution: be it distribution of welfare, or political representation at the national level. Such imbalance is made worse when the ruling elite manipulates political representation for its own benefit, and it results only in heightened tensions easily sparked off into conflict and violence.

Because this section focuses on Helvy's stories, the affects of violence are portrayed from a Muslim perspective. However, adherents of both religions are indeed victims when religious conflict as such takes place. Violence victimises everybody, and regardless of its actors – perpetrator or victim, violence is a problem for all; it affects everybody, even when one is not directly involved.

In Helvy's story *Sebab Aku Angin Sebab Aku Cinta* (Because I am the Wind Because I am Love), the setting is Ambon and the narrator is the wind, retelling a story about a girl's struggle to keep her religious identity, despite the injustices and brutality that are forced upon her. In this story, the narrator is the wind, presumably Helvy's voice articulating her personal views on the acts of inhumanity that war never ceases to produce. The narrative centres on Nona – often called Cinta (love) by the narrator. Nona is a typical Ambonese title for a young girl. *Darahitam*, another of Helvy's short stories also captures the story of an unnamed girl of Kalimantan. In both stories, the anonymity of the protagonist aims to show the generality of the experience: any girl, of any social categorisation, might become another Nona of Ambon, or another nameless Dayak girl of Kalimantan. Nona and the nameless Dayak girl are representations of the many nameless girls and women across the archipelago who are victimised by forces external to them,

who are violated because of their gender, and who have to struggle to maintain their identity. In *Sebab Aku Angin Sebab Aku Cinta*, the narrator recalls the occasion when Muslims were massacred during their Eid El Fitri prayers. The most celebrated day in the Muslim calendar was turned into a tragedy, as Nona and many other Muslims witnessed their families, neighbours and others killed: Nona sees her father beheaded in front of her; her mother stoned to death; and her baby brother thrown into a burning building. Since that massacre many Muslims have been driven away from the city of Ambon: thousands became IDPs. This story is Helvy's fictional representation of the true incident that took place on the 19th of January 1999, when the so-called religious conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims began to spark off. What triggered the conflict remains unclear, although many believe that what began as a criminal issue escalated into religious incidents and conflict and resulted in an extreme social cost.[48]

IDPs are a major phenomenon of war, as is exile, and thus many stories about war reflect this phenomenon. The symbolic representation of woman as mother/earth/country/homeland appropriates woman as a signifier of communal identity. The relationship between place and identity is strongly embodied in the gendered nature of such allegory, which posits woman as bound by communal identity. Exile is forced upon the majority of women and children in conflict areas, and because they have to leave their land – their community – it is no longer available as a signifier of identity. For many women, losing their land – losing their identity – also means the collapse of female agency. In the story of Nona female identity revolves primarily around land and religion: resistance to exile functions as a complex strategy to reinforce identity. When Nona, in order to secure her safety is faced with exile – leaving her motherland – and the removing of her *jilbab,* the relinquishing of religious identity, she is defiant. Rather, she chooses to confront her assailants: to define her own agency, her own *jihad*: 'I will never leave. (...) All I have now is Allah and this land. I have to defend the truth.'[49] With her love of the land, her vow to remain in her homeland, and her faith, she creates a story of struggle in defence of her right to freedom.

Regardless of their religion, ethnicity or ideological creed, there are those who do not take sides in a conflict, yet are victimised because of their refusal to choose a side. In the battle between the oppressor and the oppressed, the ultimate victims are the innocent. Helvy's story *Darahitam* embodies the victimisation of the innocent. Any conflict has a cost, but the innocent pay the major cost. Without taking sides, through this story Helvy suggests that in war all sides lose. This is the message Helvy wants the reader to grasp: everyone is a victim and only violence survives. *Darahitam* captures the experience of a nameless

Dayak girl whose father is murdered by a Madurese, a migrant in the Dayak homeland. She is the only survivor of the family. The story takes place in Sambas, in the heart of Kalimantan, where ethnic conflict between the indigenous Malay Sambas (often called Dayaks) and the migrant Madurese, who are mostly Muslim, reached its peak between 1999-2000, and resulted in the displacement of the Madurese from the region. The nameless girl hates the Madurese for murdering her family, yet when her neighbour, a drunk, indigenous Malay named Nerang attempts to rape her, it is her Madurese neighbour, Alawy, who saves her. Alawy, a Muslim, runs an orphanage for children, regardless of their ethnicity or religion. Someone from the ethnic group she despises saves her. The nameless girl witnesses the beheading of Alawy by Nerang, [50] and hears his last confession about how conflict generates more complicated problems:

> It's true that I'm of Madurese descent, but I was born in Palangkaraya. I've never been to Madura (...) My parents have lived there for many years. Oh yes, my name is Alawy. What's yours?[51]

Alawy brings into the story the complicated definition of 'home'. Ethnically Alawy is a Madurese, but his home is Sambas. Alawy's case shows the ambivalence of migrant identity. What is 'home'? Is it defined in terms of genealogy, race, ethnicity, culture or geographic location? Through the figure of Alawy Helvy presents the sense of the problematic of migrant identity.

In a multi-ethnic society, ethnicity occupies a crucial place in the formation of one's identity. In Indonesia, for example, the emphasis is more on one's ethnic identity, rather than one's sense of being an Indonesian. Living inside Indonesian territorial borders one is not much challenged in terms of one's national identity: a sense of being an Indonesian is usually taken for granted. After reading Anderson's *Imagined Communities* in a simplistic way:[52]one will have an impression that since nationalism is imagined, a sense of being an Indonesian seems to exist beyond everyday reality. Nationalism is only strongly felt when an Indonesian is living overseas and his/her nationalism is confronted. As for Alawy in the story, and for most Indonesians, especially those living outside multi-ethnic cities like Jakarta, ethnic background is important. To the question, '*Anda orang mana*?' (Where are you from?), the common answer would be, '*saya orang Madura*,' (I'm a Madurese or I am from Madura) and not, 'I am Indonesian.' However, Alawy's grounding of identity is not formed by his ethnicity *per se*, but his 'earth' or his place also contributes a notion of identity that resists being subsumed under merely ethnic labelling. Alawy could be an ex-

ample of migrant identity that is often inevitably hybrid. Hence, Helvy introduces the hybridity of cultural practices between the Madurese and the Dayaks. Aware that migrant identity walks an uneasy line between adopted and genealogical practices, she is concerned with articulating that in-between-ness, rather than attempting to dogmatically assert any sense of ethnic purity. It is always uneasy to try to establish identity solely through ethnicity, especially in Indonesia where almost everyone comes from the cross of ethnicity, religion, culture, class and status.

Ethnic difference and religious difference indeed are not the major source of conflict, the most primary cause is likely the failure to understand and tolerate difference. The nameless girl of Helvy's story understands this: although she is horrified at the death of her family by the Madurese, she is equally horrified by Alawy's death at the hands of Nerang. After witnessing Alawy's tragic and violent death and knowing his devotion to love and non-violence, the girl takes him as her role model. At the end of the story she decides to take a new road, 'the road that was once laid down by the man [Alawy] in his indifference. The road of most love, the road that doesn't discriminate anyone's blood.'[53] Alawy, despite his genuine nature and religious piety: his *amr ma'ruf nahy munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil acts) is not exempted from the violence of war. His innocence does not allow him to escape from death, but the girl realises that violence must not be returned with violence, that revenge and hatred will not stop the cycle of violence and victimisation. The story ends without clearly giving us a solution to the problem: the conflict between the Dayaks and the Madurese is never resolved. The war brings only death, despair, anger, revenge, hatred, and sorrow, and this reflects the reality of the conflict. All the Madurese were driven out of Sambas and were no longer welcomed by the Dayaks. In recent years the conflict in Sambas has been suppressed, but the problems caused by relocation are yet to be resolved.[54] Nevertheless, through her character, Helvy celebrates an alternative way to reconstruct a plural community based on justice and equality: a road with no discrimination. The girl continues Alawy's heritage, looking for alternative means to violent action, and becoming involved in causes to help the oppressed and the dispossessed, such as the children that Alawy housed in his orphanage. Her awareness and sensitivity that war results only in victimisation leads her to become socially committed to peace and active for change in her personal life. Helvy's Dayak girl is a representation for a culture of non-violence.

With this story Helvy challenges any attempt to categorise conflicts such as that between the Dayaks and Madurese as solely caused by ethnic-religious factors. In effect she challenges a simple homogenisation of cause. In any group – ethnic, religious, class, or any other, conflicts

are likely coloured by personal interests, which are undeniably central yet very subtle. Ethnic, religious or ideological differences are then used to envelop and mask these vested personal interests. Ethnic, religious and ideological values are, to a certain degree, dissimilar, yet personal and communal relations between members of different groups are not always shaped by such differences. Labelling a person simply by her/his ethnicity or religion is dangerous and problematic, because classification is often used to discriminate. This is illustrated in the case of the Dayak versus the Madurese in Helvy's story. Alawy, for example, is of Madurese descent, yet culturally he is Dayak and religiously he is Muslim, not *helu* (the earliest religion of the Dayak Ngaju).[55] Alawy's dying 'confession' brings into focus the problematic of identity. Identity is not monolithic, nor a univocal system determined only through structures within that system. It is often fragmented and thus opens possibilities for a multi-vocal construction of personal and communal identity.

Alawy is an example of the innocent, like the millions of IDPs who are forced from their homelands into exile. Where violence rules their innocence is simply sacrificed. For Alawy, and for IDPs, self and place are intertwined in shaping one's identity and exile is a terrible fate. The nameless Dayak girl and Inong represent the many women in conflict areas who are dominated, violated, abused, beaten, raped, and who commit suicide or are killed by men who are themselves manipulated by power. It is a vicious circle in which women are the ultimate victims.

War in the Global World

Physical spaces, geographic locations and homelands are key indicators of the divergent articulations of *cinta tanah air* (literally meaning loving the homeland – patriotism) that women writers are producing. Patriotism is not exclusively male. The character Nona, for example, transgresses this territory commonly associated with men and transforms it into hers. As Nona parallels her *jihad* to those of other Muslims across the world in Bosnia, Palestine, Kashmir, Kosovo, Myanmar, Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Algeria and other regions where Muslims are targets of ethnic/religious conflicts, her story moves beyond regional boundaries, [56] and Helvy undeniably moves her national agendas to global ones. Helvy's stories, *Maut di Kamp Loka* (Death in Loka Camp), *Bait-bait Aku, Ayah dan Dudayev* (The Stanzas of Mine, Father's and Dudayev's), *Je Ne Te Quite Jamais, Palestine*[57] (I Will Never Leave You, Palestine) all have similar themes of the brutality and injustices that Muslims have to suffer. In these stories, Helvy attempts to address the notion of patri-

otism through her female protagonists. Through the *jihad* of her female characters the author posits the struggle for national identity within the boundaries of female narratives. In *Maut di Kamp Loka* the character Lizetta, a Bosnian Muslim, struggles against the Serbians who are about to kill all the Bosnians in the Loka Camp. Before her death (she is run over by a military tank) Lizetta helps her fellow female Muslims in the camp to revolt against their Serbian oppressors. Her martyrdom is justified through religion and patriotism, as she believes that to die in defence of her religion and national identity is part of a Muslim's responsibility. Lizetta says that to fight on the path of God and to die for it satisfies Muslims' yearning to meet their Creator. She is not afraid of death for she sees it as a way to reach God.[58]

The character Zahwa in *Je Ne Te Quite Jamais, Palestine* is similar to Lizetta. Zahwa comes from a rich family and follows her parents to live in Paris when Israel invades Palestine. After ten years of exile in Paris her longing to see her homeland takes her back to visit Palestine. In Gaza, she meets Sarah, the mother of three children, whose husband was killed by Israeli soldiers. Sarah is suspected of having Hammas connections and is shot dead in front of Zahwa and the children. Zahwa, however, is not harmed, because the Israelis know that she is the daughter of Kareem Abror, of the Palestinian political elite. As with all Helvy's female characters, Zahwa too becomes a witness to atrocities and because of this decides to leave her luxurious life in Paris, despite her father's disapproval, to join Hammas. Zahwa is a political sciences student and she feels that Hammas is the only way she can manifest her patriotism. Zahwa understands Hammas' use of *intifadah* to destroy the oppression of the Israeli invasion. Zahwa trades her luxurious life because of her patriotism, risking her life to join those, who in her conviction, were those refusing to sell their land for anything.[59] The story of Vakha Bolshov in *Bait-bait Aku, Ayah dan Dudayev* is also a story of resistance to oppression. This story depicts the struggles of Chechnya against Russian aggression. Vakha follows her father's military calling and becomes a female commander famous for her bravery and courageous patriotism. At the end of the story she loses the people she loves and admires most, her father and General Dudayev. Vakha models herself after Dudayev: on his strong belief that in faith alone lies the strongest power, and that the future only belongs to those who have strong faith.[60]

In those stories Helvy portrays her woman protagonists as victims of war; however, they are not simply silenced victims. They are able to show their resistance, even if it means they need to give up pleasure, or their life. Their *jihad* is substantiated by their belief that going to war, especially when it is done for the 'right' cause is dignified. For them war must be exercised when all other means fail. They make

sense of war by enforcing another war in which they are participants. In this way they reach autonomy. However, it is interesting to see that their participation in war takes place after they witness violence or have violence forced upon them. In her war stories Helvy shows that indeed women, like men, are capable of inflicting violence. She demystifies the notion of female physical weakness and submissiveness. Female engagement in war also signifies female insertion into the narratives of patriotism and nationalism. However, although women may attain autonomy and freedom through war, such freedom and autonomy are not built upon solid ground. Violence begets more violence, pain brings more pain, authority is challenged by yet more authority, and power with more power. Seeking liberation through war means that liberation is achieved only through death, not through life, and the result is even more death. When war is used to destroy aggression the ultimate result is victimisation and destruction. In most of Helvy's stories she champions war as a liberating agent for female characters on the one hand, but on the other hand, her stories show the dreadful face of war and conflict. Helvy constantly warns the reader that war and violence can be exploited in the name of religion and ethnic supremacy, and that warfare and violent acts are often authoritative, legitimised means for actions of vengeance.

Helvy's stories reveal that for Muslims *jihad* is a contested term: it is multi-faceted and can be located in very diverse and complex backgrounds. Esposito argues that the multi-definition of *jihad* situates the term at the centre of Muslim's identity. The following quote from Esposito captures the broad notions of *jihad* ranging from non-violent to violent acts:

> Jihad as struggle pertains to the difficulty and complexity of living a good life: struggling against the evil in oneself in order to be virtuous and moral, making a serious effort to do good works and to help reform society. Depending on the circumstances in which one lives, it can also mean fighting injustice and oppression, spreading and defending Islam, and creating a just society through preaching, teaching and, if necessary, armed struggle or holy war. The two meanings of jihad, non-violent and violent, are contrasted in a well-known prophetic tradition. (...) The greater jihad is the more difficult and more important struggle against one's ego, selfishness, greed, and evil.[61]

Helvy's characters engage both in non-violent and violent *jihad*. The nameless girl in *Darahitam* achieves her triumph through understanding and kindness, whereas women like Vakha of Chechnya and Zahwa of Palestine choose to take a violent path by joining armed struggles.

Different reasons and social contexts provide the multi meanings of *jihad* and the ways Muslims make sense of it. Nonetheless, within any circumstance, *jihad* as violent struggle brings only destruction and victimisation to everybody involved. Ironically this is the very reason *jihad* comes into existence, as a counter struggle to destruction and victimisation. *Jihad* is meant to preserve life, not to bring it to destruction.

Helvy's portrayal of war and conflict serves as a reminder of the pain that war causes. Through her stories all of us are challenged to move beyond stereotypes and differences in terms of ethnicity, religion, and historical grievances, to recognise our shared values and interests and to build a common future, which is just and more humane. Also through her stories she makes us aware of what is happening, and what indeed can happen in a multi-ethnic society such as Indonesia. She is perhaps the first Indonesian female author who has created narratives that look closely at violence: what is meant by violence, how it affects people, and the factors that bring it about. Like the other three authors, Helvy portrays clearly the imperfect conditions under which her fellow 'brothers' and 'sisters' reside, regardless of their differences in terms of religion, nation or ethnicity. Through her stories she illustrates the devastating consequences of conflict, and at the same time presents us with her solutions to reduce such conflict.

Various Women, Various Lives, Various Identities

Through their female characters all four writers promote an agenda of female agency and autonomy. Through their heroines the authors disseminate their ideas on female identity, and use their narrative strategies as a means of suggesting new ways of thinking about women's own selves. The stories have an allegorical quality: they exemplify women of multiple faces showing a complexity of female experiences. A woman is subjugated yet achieves power; one is in a peripheral position yet is able to centre herself, and another gains autonomy through hardship. They are stories of complex forms of resistance to women's subjugation and exclusion, which offer ways for women to claim themselves as subjects through negotiation and re-negotiation of their positions.

Despite the criticism that the works of the four selected authors are merely didactic and lack literary merit, their works are significant as they present a variety of ways women can make meaning of their lives. For example, although the works of Abidah and Helvy are said to have a strong didactic element, their didacticism is a valuable element in disseminating messages and ideas. Abidah and Helvy make powerful points in presenting circumstances where injustice takes place. The

reader gains a clear picture of what is just as opposed to unjust, and what is equal as opposed to unequal. Even though their pictures are fictional, the characters the authors create in their narratives represent women within various cultural, social and political constellations. These characters raise questions, often providing answers, about situations in which real women in real life might find themselves. The authors' accommodation of various female representations in their works is an affirmation of women's search for identity and position. They deserve their position within the canon of Indonesian literary tradition.

Readership and Reader's Responses

Readership in Indonesian is always problematic. In comparison with its huge population, readership is considerably small. Based on the 2000 Population Census conducted by *Badan Pusat Statistik* (BPS-Statistics Indonesia), the literacy rate of the population over 10 years of age was 89.92% of the total population, but the reading public was quite low, 17.47% of the literate rate. The reading public consists of those who read newspapers and/or magazines.[62] The small numbers of the reading public is, perhaps, partly due to the lack of access to printed material and, as suggested by Amin Sweeney, because the literary tradition of the Malay world tends to be orally oriented rather than writing/reading oriented.[63] Accordingly, more people aged over 10 years of age watched television (87.47%) and listened to radio (43.72%).

Reader-responses signify how texts are constructed and, further, how the same texts impact their readers. In looking at how context and/or environment determine reader-response it is essential to carefully select the location of questionnaire distribution. This is to follow Roland Barthes' seminal proposal that plural meanings of a text lie also in its reader's position conditioned by various circumstances.[64] For that reason, 400 questionnaires were distributed to students of *Fakultas Sastra* (Faculty of Letters) of UNAIR (Universitas Airlangga, Airlangga University) Surabaya, and *Fakultas Adab* (Faculty of Humanities, comparable to *Fakultas Sastra* in public universities) of IAIN (*Institut Agama Islam Negeri*, State Institute of Islamic Studies) Sunan Ampel Surabaya.[65] The aim of the different distribution locations was to locate the significance of environmental difference. This was to answer the question: would students from similar faculties but different tertiary environments contribute a different degree of recognition of female authors writing on women's issues within an Islamic paradigm? UNAIR is regarded as a secular State University under the supervision of the Min-

istry of National Education, whereas IAIN is under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. All IAIN students are Muslims while UNAIR students are predominantly Muslims. For the survey the questionnaire was distributed only to Muslim students.

The survey was conducted from April to May 2004. The method used to select the respondents was random sampling. Respondents were personally approached and asked to allocate 30 minutes of their time to fill in the questionnaire. In calculating the response and the type of analysis performed, frequency tables were applied using the SPSS program.

Out of 400 questionnaires distributed, 387 were collected (210 from UNAIR, 177 from IAIN). Of the 387 respondents 280 are female (72.4%) and 107 male (27.6%) whose age, on average, was under 20 years: 62% under and 38% above.

Table 6.1 *Respondents' Sex*

	Number of Respondents	*Sex*	*Percentage of Sex*
UNAIR	210	151	72% Female
		59	28% Male
IAIN	177	129	73% Female
		48	27% Male
UNAIR and IAIN	387	280	72.4% Female
		107	27.6% Male

Table 6.2 *Respondents' Age and Their University*

	UNAIR	*IAIN*	*Total*	*Percentage*
18-20 years old	143	97	240	62
21-23 years old	60	68	128	33
24-26 years old	4	10	14	3.6
> 26 years old	3	2	5	1.4
Total	210	177	388	100

Respondents from both UNAIR and IAIN were predominantly female: 72% of UNAIR respondents and 73% of IAIN. Here, it is shown that although the numbers of female respondents from both UNAIR and IAIN are different, they are significantly similar in percentage compared to the male respondents. Sex is indeed an important variable as the questions posed for the respondents centred on the issues of women's problems in Islamic perspectives, to include the issues that the four authors deal with in their respective narratives and the influence upon the respondents after reading their stories. Since the survey did not include male authors and their works, it is difficult to pinpoint

reader's familiarity with the work of male writers, but female readers had a higher degree of familiarity with female authors than the male readers. In other words, the sex category is an important bond between the readers and the authors, although this does not necessarily mean that male readers will prefer the works of male authors. Nevertheless, the findings show that the sex and gender of the readers, and what they read, is intertwined, indicating the process of identification that takes place between the readers and their readings. Women as readers of what other women have written on the issues of women's lives and women's struggles will develop a women's culture, an awareness of their experiences and of the experiences of other women, which will help them shape and reshape their own identity.

Table 6.3 *Respondents' knowledge of the writers*

	Number of Respondents (UNAIR and IAIN)	In %
Respondents' knowledge of one or more than one author	165	42.5
Not knowing any of the writers	222	58.2

Table 6.4 *Actual Readers (respondents who are familiar with the writers and their writings) and their sex*

	Number of Respondents	Percentage	Number of Respondents	Percentage	Sex
UNAIR	88	42%	77	87%	Female
			11	13%	Male
IAIN	77	43%	65	84%	Female
			22	15%	Male
Total (UNAIR and IAIN)	165	42.5%	142	86%	Female
			23	14%	Male

Forty two point five per cent of total respondents (165 out of 388 respondents), comprising 42% of UNAIR and 43% of IAIN, were familiar with and had read at least one of the four authors examined. These respondents were overwhelmingly female, as male readers were only one third of the total number (14% out of 42.5%). Given the small overall number of Indonesian readers, the fact that the respondents' familiarity with the reading materials was nearly half of the sample is presumably because the survey was conducted amongst students of the Faculty of Letters whose engagement with the reading habit is considerably higher than students of other subjects. What is interesting though is the similar number of actual readers from both UNAIR and IAIN. This shows that the educational major of IAIN respondents (Isla-

mic Studies) did not make for a stronger engagement with Islamic issues presented by the four writers: IAIN students were not necessarily more familiar with, nor did they have a greater knowledge of, issues related to women and Islam than did UNAIR students. This, perhaps, indicates that issues of women and Islam in Indonesian contexts are not concerns exclusive to students of Islamic studies. The Islamic section (*Sie Kerohanian Islam*) of UNAIR's student body regularly holds discussions, academic and non-academic, on subjects ranging from Islamic *shari'a* to feminism in Islam. IAIN also has a student association.[66]

Table 6.5 *Author's fame amongst actual readers: one reader might know more than one author*

	Number of Actual Readers	*In Percent*
Abidah El Khalieqy	70	42%
Helvy Tiana Rosa	99	60%
Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim	60	36%
Titis Basino P.I.	51	31%

Of the four writers, amongst 165 actual readers (readers who are familiar with the writers and have read at least one of their works), Helvy Tiana Rosa was best known (60%), followed by Abidah El-Khalieqy (42%), Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim (36%), and Titis Basino P.I. (31%). The youngest of the four, Helvy, commonly narrates the lives of young Muslim girls in their teens or early twenties in her short stories. The age gap between Helvy's characters and their readers is not wide, and some readers no doubt grew up with Helvy's stories, as she was previously the chief writer/editor of a famous Islamic teenage magazine *Annida*. Abidah ranks second after Helvy. Abidah, Ratna and Titis, on the other hand, portray women, but not teenagers, of various ages. Abidah, though recently writing narratives of young women does not write exclusively about young women, rather mature, often married women of different ages. Ratna is known to mostly write about women in rural areas. Titis hardly ever writes narratives using teenagers or young adults; she mostly depicts the lives of adult Muslim females and their married lives. However, very few of the university students were married.

About the question concerning the readers' familiarity with the four authors and their writings, the following discussion is based on the answers of 42.5% of total respondents who are named as actual readers.

Interestingly enough, while 42% of the respondents believed that the writings of the four authors worked within Islamic contexts, only 25.6% thought they focused on women's issues. However, 24.8% believed that they promoted women's rights through their writings. Pro-

blematical images of fiction may also present problems when reading the texts. How true is fiction and how fictitious is truth may circulate in readers' minds as they decide whether the fiction they have read embodies a large degree of truth in its accurate representation. It is difficult to divorce one from the other. Nonetheless, the survey clearly shows that fiction is a privileged site of representation that can overcome the dichotomy of fiction/fact: 24.8% of respondents found that the texts conveyed agendas of promoting women's rights, and 25.6% also insisted that women's issues were portrayed in those fictional texts, a signifying marker connecting the women's actual world and fiction.

Responses to Individual Writers

The following discussion will examine the responses to each individual author's work: to find what issues each author mostly represented and what influence their work had upon the respondents.

Table 6.6 *Percentage of issues raised by the writers*

	Issues Raised	*Number of Respondents*	*Percentage*
Familiarity with the authors	The writers write narratives within Islamic contexts	69	42%
	The writers are perceived as Muslim writers	42	25.6%
	The writers enjoy prominent positions in the Indonesian literary tradition	66	17%
	The writers deal with women's issues in their narratives	42	25.6%
	The writers promote women's rights in their writings	41	24.8%
Familiarity with the writings	The writings are a reflection of the contemporary situation	99	60%

In Table 6.6, it shows that 60% of the readers responded that some works of the four writers did reflect the contemporary situation. In more detailed numbers, see Table 6.7: 74% of Helvy's readers, 57% of Abidah's readers, 54% of Ratna's readers and 50% of Titis' readers perceived that the narratives of their authors were engaged with issues of contemporary Indonesian Muslim women. One question posed to the respondents was: what issues were mostly pictured by the four writers in general? Abidah's actual readers (70 respondents) replied that her writings largely worked on issues of violence against women. The percentages were: domestics violence (30%); discrimination against women (25.7%); polygamy (22.9%); women's responsibilities in social, political, economic and cultural spheres (18.57); women and their reli-

gious, societal and cultural piety (17.14%); women's rights (17.14); their lack of education and intellectual capacity were each less than 15%. Helvy's actual readers (99 respondents) believed that Helvy's narratives involved issues such as women's rights such as women's reproduction rights (27.27%), women's responsibilities in social, political, economic and cultural spheres (23.23%), violence against women (22.22%), and women and their religious, societal and cultural piety, women and war in conflict areas were less than 20%; other issues such as women's sexuality, women's roles and gender-based labour division each achieved less than 10%. Ratna's actual readers (60 respondents) answered that her works mostly involved issues concerning polygamy (31.66%), discrimination against women (25%), domestic violence and women's rights (21.66%), and other issues such as *kodrat*, women and their lack of education and intellectual capacity, as well as other issues were less than 15% each. Titis' readers (51 respondents) responded that issues presented in her writings were women and their responsibilities (21.56%), polygamy (21.56%), women's sexuality and women's lack of education are both 15.68%, discrimination against women (13.72%), women's *kodrat* (11.34%), violence against women (9.2%), women's roles (8.2%) and other issues concerning women's education, women and war in conflict areas (11.76%), while other issues such as women's kodrat, their roles and gender-based labour were less than 10%. These percentages significantly show that the top issues that these women authors deal with in their works are violence against women, women's rights and responsibilities, polygamy, discrimination against women and women in war and conflict areas. It is interesting that the responses to issues such as women's sexuality and sexual division of labour, for example, are relatively small compared to other issues. This, presumably, is because discourses concerning sexuality are hardly taken into the public arena, and the division of labour between men and women is seen as naturally constructed.

Another interesting ratio is whether the four writers challenge or reinforce the already established identities of Muslim women in Indonesia as shown in Table 6.8. Forty-three per cent of all readers found that the works of the writers were challenged perceptions of Muslim women identities overall, and more particularly in Indonesian contexts. The percentages were as follows: 52.52% of Helvy's readers, 45.7% of Abidah's, 40% of Ratna's and 31.37% of Titis'. This was despite the fact that, in some cases, the narratives might move beyond the borders of Indonesia, such as in Helvy's and Abidah's stories where the settings take place in other places of the world. In responding to the question of the affect of the texts after reading them, 23.63% of the actual readers found that they felt some influence on their understanding of gender issues after reading the works of the authors: 29.29% of Helvy's

Table 6.7 *Issues Raised by the Individual Writers*

	Abidah's Readers	*Percentage*	*Helvy's Readers*	*Percentage*	*Ratna's Readers*	*Percentage*	*Titis Basino's Readers*	*Percentage*
Actual Readers	70	42.5	99	60	60	36.36	51	30.90
The author's writings reflect or mirror the contemporary situation	40	57	73	74	32	54	26	50
Violence against women including domestic violence	21	30	22	22.22	13	21.66	8	15.68
Women's rights such as reproduction rights	12	17.14	27	27.27	13	21.66	8	15.68
Women's responsibilities in social, political, economic and cultural spheres	13	18.57	23	23.23	9	15	11	21.56
Women and war in conflict areas	8	11.43	22	22.22	8	13.33	6	11.76
Polygamy	16	22.9	16	16.16	19	31.66	11	21.56
Discrimination against women	18	25.7	17	17.17	15	25	7	13.72
Women and lack of education	9	12.9	14	18.18	8	13.33	8	15.68
Women's lack of intellectual capacity	7	10	11	11.11	6	10	2	3.92
Women's sexuality	2	2.85	9	9.9	7	11.66	8	15.68
Women and their religious, societal and cultural piety	12	17.14	18	18.18	5	8.3	6	9.8
Women and their kodrat	4	5.7	15	15.15	9	15	6	9.8
Women's roles in social, political, economical and cultural spheres	6	8.5	6	6	3	5	3	5.8
Women and gender-based labour division	1	1.42	7	7	3	5	2	3.9

Table 6.8 *The effects of the authors' writings upon the readers*

	All readers	*Percentage*	*Abidah's Readers*	*Percentage*	*Helvy's Readers*	*Percentage*	*Ratna's Readers*	*Percentage*	*Titis Basino's Readers*	*Percentage*
Challenging perceptions of Muslim women's identities overall, and more particularly in Indonesian contexts.	71	43	32	45.7	52	52.52	24	40	16	31.37
Influence on readers' understanding of gender issues after reading the works of the authors	39	23.63	17	24.28	29	29.29	13	21.66	9	17.64

readers, 24.28% of Abidah's, 21.66% of Ratna and 17.64% of Titis'. The numbers, although relatively small, do show that the narratives are informative about gender issues. However, more in-depth surveys need to be done to measure the degree of effectiveness of such influence. Whether, for example, narratives could actually play a role in promoting an ideology presented in the text, either implicitly or obviously. To a certain degree, Abidah, Helvy, Ratna and Titis have succeeded in creating text-reader-author relationships, which channel the authors' agendas through their writings.

The readers' responses that were conducted among the students show that these four writers, although they are not members of *sastra wangi* do have loyal readers who establish a strong connection between their readership, the writings that they read and the reading process that occurs in between, as these readers manage to grasp the messages that are attempted by the authors. The authors can be said to be successful in delivering their messages and creating a community of readers who are appreciative of their works; by acknowledging women's issues and problems elevated by these authors in their texts.

Conclusion

The various strands of contemporary feminism call for more nuanced readings of the political and ideological construction of women's roles within which feminist theory, practice and reading are situated. Muslim women are undeniably responsive to such calls and suggest various ways of engaging with their own social, cultural and political conditions. Through various discourses of their own they demonstrate their subject position and call for the 'woman's question' to be centred at the public level. In so doing they show that they are no longer 'objects' in identity construction.

The works of Titis Basino, Ratna Indraswati Ibrahim, Abidah El Khalieqy and Helvy Tiana Rosa offer narratives of feminist discursive practices, which provide new and fresh engagements of women with both Islam and modernity. Within their feminist reading the writers understand that gender roles are negotiable rather than inherent. In representing women in a variety of discourses they draw multi-faceted women struggling against repression and domination, and resisting their status as 'powerless'. The authors tackle various issues across a wide spectrum in their works: ranging from women's place in the domestic sphere to women's place in the public domain. What is central in their writing is their refusal to define women other than from the perspective of women themselves. Giving women a voice allows them to place themselves at the centre of their identity construction.

Helvy Tiana Rosa, for example, uses a discourse of women and war to represent the struggles of women. In her narratives women are victims because they are subjected to violence, yet at the same time women can be perpetrators of violence, especially against men. Women can be actors, perpetrators or victims in these home front narratives. Helvy challenges the notion of women's physical weakness. In so doing, the characters she creates are a mixture of feminine and masculine qualities. The erosion of a clear-cut division between the feminine and the masculine is a sharp challenge to gender construction and roles: she shows roles can be negotiated. Through her characters, she authorises the 'other', and creates *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, sisterhood under the banner of Islam. Helvy is often accused of presenting through her narratives an 'us versus them' attitude: Muslims against non-Muslims.

Nevertheless, if read closely, her stories construct women deprived by warfare, yet from this they learn understanding, how to negotiate, and find ways to move peacefully through their lives. When Helvy's characters use *jihad* to protect their bodies and land the term takes on new meaning. What happens to women in war and conflict? The answer to that question is provided by Helvy's war stories: she gives women a place in history.

Abidah El Khalieqy is indeed a promoter of women's rights in the heart of Islamic discourses. Her narratives capture the ways in which women conceptualise their bodies and their sexual and reproductive functions, which are intricately linked to their social, cultural and political environments. She uses the language of the female body to represent women's own culture. Abidah's female characters place education, social reform and reproduction rights at the centre of women's self-construction.

Ratna Indraswati Ibrahim's discourse is different. Her narratives concentrate on the victimisation of women because of their sexual identity. In her narratives women function as objects inherited from a society that says women matter less than men: a society that thinks women barely belong to the culture that marginalises and silences them through domesticity. Ratna raises critical issues about the subjugation and domination of women, and captures the imbalance in social relations. Yet Ratna's women are not all submissive: those denied their rights respond to the injustice they experience. Through her narratives Ratna acknowledges the struggles of women, especially those in underprivileged conditions.

In establishing a women's culture, Titis Basino presents narratives that view women from the perspective of an Islamic mystical terrain, namely Sufism. Titis' works largely emphasise the spiritual dimension of her female characters, representing the inner or esoteric sphere of Islam. Her characters are mostly housewives, whose first and foremost struggle involves choosing at each critical moment in their lives to remember and surrender actively to God. Her use of Sufism attacks the general perception of Sufism as being orthodox. In Titis' world, the spiritual realm of Islam is everywhere, and is not limited by time or space. Titis believes that without spirituality an adherent of a religion will simply lose her/his core identity. Titis' other strong narrative issue is the practice of polygamy; she approaches the issue from various stands. She looks at the influence of historical conditions, and her narratives show that the voices of women involved in the practice must certainly be heard, and understood in terms of complex cultural and social relations.

The readers' responses of the writings of these authors show that their works are not without influence. Although their readers are not a

majority in the Indonesian fiction reading public, their readers can understand their messages well, and at the same time believe that their works pose challenges to the old perceptions of Indonesian Muslim women. These readers too claim that their works are not 'dead texts' but constantly moving in the readers' mind, exerting influence with the hope that their reading community can work together with these authors to create a fairer construction of Indonesian Muslim women from female perspectives as most of their readers are also female. Women have achieved becoming writers and becoming readers.

Where Islam is the core entity around which identity revolves, it must be understood by Muslims that Islam teaches justice and equality, but also that Islam is subject to interpretation, which is contextualised across time and space, and across cultures and regions. The construction of Muslim women's identity is also subject to different contexts of time, space, cultures and regions. Through their fiction Titis, Ratna, Abidah and Helvy present the multi-faceted identities of Muslim women: they depict different experiences in response to different settings. Nevertheless, all the women aim for the creation of more just and equitable conditions for human beings of all sexual and social categories.

In breaking the silence and giving women a voice the four authors have indeed created 'feminist novels'. They take ethical and moral positions and are didactic in the project of cultural transformation, of establishing new values, which underline justice and equality. They are revisionist mythmakers who refuse to keep silent. They replace heroes with heroines, and revise the stories of grand heroic figures with stories of ordinary women. The authors celebrate female survival that may be found in the different ways in which women have responded to their historical situations.

The discourses of Titis, Ratna, Helvy and Abidah remind their readers of a uniting value of various identity constructions for Muslim women. Their female heroes affect and inspire readers and convey to them that Islam opens its door widely for its adherents to speak their minds in response to the authoritative discourse restricting and denying Muslims their rights. Their readers' responses show that these writers raise issues of women's rights and pose challenges to the prevailing women's identity which is often believed to be very restricted. They give readers new eyes to look at the problems of gender conveyed in their writings. Their female readers may find inspiration in the characters presented, while male readers may be made aware of how male-dominated culture impacts on gender constructions. Their authors' messages may well be received, thus readers can soon put into action their jihad for equality and justice.

This is only a partial study of a much broader feminist project. Joining their sisters in the rest of the Muslim world, women presented in this study, Indonesian and non-Indonesian, are struggling to improve women's conditions and grant women a better life in quantity and quality. Certainly, other studies are deemed beneficial to fill the gaps, to complete what is lacking and to continue where the others have left off. Further research of Muslim women, their identities and their efforts to obtain rights are crucial in giving a broad spectrum of how Muslim women look at their identity. As this study is an academic endeavour to portray the dynamics and multiplicity of the politics of religious identity of Muslim women in Indonesian fiction and their demands for women's rights, such activism does not stop here. NGOs, academic lectures or public lectures can be tools for expressing women's ideas and beliefs, providing a necessary avenue of analysis for a comprehensive understanding of Indonesian Muslim women's lives.

Muslim women in Indonesia do enjoy greater freedom than their sisters in the Middle Eastern regions. Yet sharing similar goals for promoting and striving for women's equal position in the eyes of Islam, the Indonesian Muslim women are shaped by local interpretations and local cultures. Because of the transnational network of Islamic movements across the globe, there are certainly those who attempt to colour Indonesian Islam with only Middle Eastern emblems and cultural practices. However, there are still many of those who believe that the practice of Muslim religious identity in Indonesia is uniquely Indonesian because of different cultures and traditions. Muslim women in Indonesia arguably enjoy a better social position than their sisters in more conservative Islamic regions. Yet, exemplified by the writings of the four selected authors, women are not automatically allowed freedom equal to men. Women's participation in private and public arenas is still limited, reminding readers that the road to equality is still a long way off. A danger for the future is when the more women demand having equal rights as men, the more conservative interpretations of Islam that confine women from a broader social participation become. These may be consciously exaggerated and exploited to satisfy vested interests of individuals having political power. Muslims in Indonesia should be made aware of such agendas. Radicalism in theological practices poses another danger to the development of the feminist movement. A culture of tolerance needs to be supported and encouraged in order to prevent emotional and strident reactions within the Islamic community accusing reformers of betraying Islam. The seeds for civil and public tolerance, which have been within Indonesia's Islamic community for so long, can be developed and used as a core to represent a form of Islam fully compatible with democracy, pluralism, and non-

confrontational relationships with elements of Indonesian society and the rest of the world.

Despite the fact that Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world, its appearance in discourses about Islam, particularly in Western ones, is rare. Islam is immediately given a Middle Eastern reference. That Indonesian Islam has a thriving cultural life is often neglected by scholars, mostly Westerners and Arabs who maintain that Islam is only centred in the Middle Eastern regions. Indonesian Islam, in its attempt to represent democratic aspirations, provides needed balance to understand politics in the Islamic world. In speaking of Islam, Muslim women and gender construction, Indonesian interpretations and its on-going cultural dynamics certainly need to be included. The importance of Indonesian Islam within the global Islamic scope should not be underestimated, suggesting that it is necessary to remind the international world that Islam comes with numerous faces and its adherents make sense of it in numerous ways considering its culturally diverse contexts.

It is hoped that this study will reach greater readers outside academia. A larger readership will generate more dissemination of the messages delivered by the authors this study has examined. In so doing, this study will not solely reside in academic discourse. My hope is that it becomes a moving text in the mind of its readers so that they will eventually transform words into actions.

Notes

Introduction

1 'Pelita Amina Memanaskan Dunia,' *Gatra*, No 21 Tahun XI, 9 April 2005, pp 25-28.

2 Ebadi's acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize, 10 December 2003, quoted from Margot Badran, 'Between Secular and Islamic feminism/s Reflections on the Middle East and Beyond', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Winter 2005, 1, 1, p. 22. Italics mine.
See also Ebadi's Nobel lecture in Oslo, Norway, 10 December 2003, *Nobel Prize*, Internet, http://www.nobelprize.org, and Ebadi's speech, http://nobelprize.org/peace/laureates/2003/ebadi-lecture-e.html, (Friday, 14 October 2005).

3 Several women's centres have been established in many Indonesian cities such as Rahima in Jakarta, Rifka Annisa in Yogyakarta and the PSW (Women's Studies Centre) in IAINs (*Institute Agama Islam Negeri*, State Islamic Institutes) and UINs (*Universitas Islam Negeri*, State Islamic University), and in private and public universities in various cities across Indonesia; Makasar, Medan, Malang, Surabaya etc. Some modern *pesantrens* (Islamic boarding schools) also set up similar centres such as in Malang and Cirebon.

4 *Sastra wangi* refers to narratives (mostly novels) written by a group of young female writers in their 20s or 30s, mainly about women of their age, living in urban settings, and enjoying freedom in expressing their sex and politics. In the words of Djenar Mahesa Ayu, one of the *sastra wangi* writers, issues of cosmopolitanism, sex and taboo are strongly presented in the writings of these new young writers (Michael Bodden, 'Shattered Families: Transgression, Cosmopolitanism and Experimentation in the fiction of Djenar Mahesa Ayu,' *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, vol. 41, no. 2 (2007), p. 96. The notion of *sastra wangi* remains controversial until today. More discussion on this term can be found in Chapter 3.

5 'Chick lit' narratives are always set in urban environments, evolving around stories of young cosmopolitan working women aged 20s -30s surrounded with urbanised issues, such as fashion, shopaholism, sex and of course, a Barbie-like sophistication in the form of writings. 'Chick lit' is styled in a humorous fashion and very light reading, and the book covers are always coloured in pastel with illustrations *à la* Barbie.

6 There are other writers such as Herlinatiens who published *Garis Tepi Seorang Lesbian* (2002). Her fiction is about the life of a lesbian Muslim. Written by a Muslim girl wearing *jilbab*, this fiction has triggered strong controversy even until today. *Wajah Sebuah Vagina* (2004) by Naning Prawoto is a similar case.

7 Ruth-Ellen Boetcher and Elizabeth Mittman, 'An Introductory Essay', *The Politics of the Essay: Feminist Perspectives*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1993, p. 17.

8 Judith Fetterley, 'Introduction on the Politics of Literature', *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1978, p. xiii.

9 Judith Fetterley, 'On the Politics of Literature', *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (eds.)(eds.), 2nd ed., Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J., p. 569.
10 Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, 'Introduction: The Story So Far', *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*, Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (eds.), Macmillan Education, Ltd., London, 1989, pp. 1-20.
11 Belsey and Moore, 'Introduction', p. 1.
12 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, H.M. Parshley (trans. and ed.), Jonathan Cape, London, 1953, p. 26.
13 Quoted from Fetterley, 'Introduction', pp. 568-569.
14 Janet Todd, *Feminist Literary History: A Defence*, Polity Press, Cambridge and Oxford, 1988, p. 83.
15 Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and State Apparatuses', quoted in Janet Todd, p. 85.
16 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
17 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
18 Susan Koppelman Cornillon, *Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives*, Bowling Green University Popular Press, Bowling Green, Ohio, 1973, pp. ix-x.
19 Ruth Robbins, *Literary Feminisms*, MacMillan Press, London, 2000, p. 51.
20 *Ibid*, p. 57.
21 Maria Pia Lara, *Moral Textures: Feminist Narratives in the Public Sphere*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 92.
22 *Ibid.*, p. 93.
23 Quoted in *Literary Feminism*, Ruth Robbins, p. 75.
24 Elaine Showalter, 'Toward a Feminist Poetics', *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*. E. Showalter (ed.), 1st. ed, Pantheon, New York, 1985, p. 128.
25 Elaine Showalter, 'Toward a Feminist Poetics', quoted in *Literary Feminism*, p. 75.
26 Elaine Showalter, 'Toward a Feminist Poetics', *The New Feminist Criticism*, p. 129.
27 Ruth Robbins, *Literary Feminism*, p. 96.
28 *Ibid.*, p. 100.
29 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On The Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, Routledge, New York & London, 1993, p. 10.
30 Lara, *Moral Textures: Feminist Narratives in the Public Sphere*, p. 171.
31 For details, see Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, pp. 122-123.
32 Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1989, p. 1.
33 Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race Femininity and Representation*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, p. 20.
34 Alice Parker and Elizabeth Meese, 'Introduction', *Feminist Critical Negotiations*, Alice A. Parker and Elizabeth A. Meese (eds.), John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1992, p. xi.
35 Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1987, p. 13. Although Smith discusses the problematic of autobiography, her discussion on the narrative, in my opinion, is applicable to other literary genres.
36 Maria Pia Lara, *Moral Textures*, p. 36.
37 *Ibid.*, p. 109.
38 *Ibid.*, p. 112.
39 *Ibid.*, p. 171.

Chapter 1

1 *The Jakarta Post*, 16 June 1999. Internet, http://www.thejakartapost.com, (10 April 2002).
2 *Ibid.*, 17 July 1999, Internet, http://www.thejakartapost.com, (10 April 2002).
3 *Ibid.*, 17 July 1999, Internet, http://www.thejakartapost.com, (10 April 2002). NU is Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation and it sponsored PKB for the 1999 and subsequent national elections.
4 *Ibid.*, 29 June 1999, http://www.thejakartapost.com, (10 April 2002), italics mine.
5 *Ibid.*, 28 June 1999, italics mine.
6 Seth Mydan, 'Can She Run Indonesia, It's about Islam, or Is It?' *The New York Times International*, 20 June 1999.
7 Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, Mary Jo Lakeland (trans.), Polity Press, Cambridge, 1993.
8 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
9 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
10 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
11 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
12 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
13 *Ibid.*, p. 33.
14 Quoted in Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, p. 33. See page 1 in the Introduction for controversy over Amina Wadud to be an *imam* for Friday prayer.
15 Mernissi, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
16 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
17 *Ibid.* p. 13.
18 Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, p. 54.
19 *The Jakarta Post*, 13 July 1999, Internet, http://www.thejakartapost.com. (10 April 2002).
20 Mernissi in 'Introduction: Was Benazir Bhutto the First?' in The *Forgotten Queens of Islam*, p. 5. In this book, Mernissi draws a distinction between religious Islam and political Islam, as she writes: 'In order to avoid misunderstanding and confusion, let me say that in this book every time I speak of Islam without any other qualification, I am referring to political Islam, to Islam as the practice of power, to the acts of people animated by passions and motivated by interests, which is different from Islam *Risala*, the divine message, the ideal recorded in the Koran, the holy book. When I speak of the latter, I will identify it as Islam *Risala* or spiritual Islam.'
21 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
22 *Ibid.*, p. 33.
23 Fazlur Rahman in *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1982, p. 22. Rahman uses Islamicity to refer to the notion of Islam.
24 John Esposito, 'Introduction: Women in Islam and Muslim societies' in *Islam, Gender and Social Change*, John Esposito and Yvonne Haddad (eds.)(eds.), pp. i-xxviii.
25 Italics, my emphasis, *ibid.*, p. 121.
26 *Ibid.*, p. xi-xii.
27 See report from Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on education for the girls section, Internet, http://www.moe.gov.sa, (15 November 2005).
28 In Indonesia, FGM receives very little attention. See Andrée Feillard and Lies Marcoes, 'Female Circumcision in Indonesia', *Archipel* 56, vol. 1, pp. 337-367. In this article, Feillard and Marcoes discuss the existence of female circumcision for Indonesian Muslim (baby) girls. Perceived to be inexistent, it does exist and is often done in se-

cret or discreetly. However, until today, this practice remains unpopular and still lacks of documentation. Its operation varies from region to region, from 'cutting off the tiny part of the clitoris' to 'piercing with a needle or the edge of a knife to extract a single drop of blood' (p. 359). The question whether it is an obligation in terms of religion (Islam) or *adat* (culture) remains unanswered. Also, Indonesian female circumcision might also be viewed as an elitist approach to the notion of equality as such practice is conducted by few Muslims.

It also should be noted, however, that female circumcision in Indonesia might differ from the practice occurring in some African countries in which 15 % results in infabulation while the vast majority (85%) consists of clitoridectomy or excision. See *Female Genital Mutilation*, Amnesty International, Internet, http:// http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/intcam/femgen/fgm1.htm, (16 March 2006).

29 Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1992, p. 183. In this book, Ahmed records the historical discourses that shape women and gender in Middle Eastern societies. Ahmed argues that these discourses 'shape and are shaped by specific moments and specific societies' (p.2), thus it is necessary to look at the root of such discourses socially, institutionally and verbally.

30 *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Abdullah Yusuf Ali (trans.), New Revised Edition, Amana Corporation, Brentwood, Maryland, 1989, (p. 1432). Qur'an, *sura* 49, verse 13 says 'O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made unto you Nations and tribes, that ye may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you.' Ali explains this verse by stating that before Allah all are one, thus equal, and the one getting most honour is the most righteous. According to Ali, tribes, races and nations are just labelled so that people can be known by their differing characteristics. The Indonesian translation may carry a slight difference though the basic concept is the same. My own translation of the Indonesian version is 'among you, the most noble person in the sight of Allah is the faithful one.' (p. 847) in *Al Qur'an dan Terjemahnya*, The Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (trans.), PT. Sari Agung, Jakarta, 2001.

31 Leila Ahmed, 'First Feminists', *Women and Gender in Islam*, p. 169-188.

32 Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Tresspass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*, p. 9.

33 Fatima Mernissi, 'Preface to the English Edition' in *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, p. ix. In this book, Mernissi goes back through history finding that gender inequality in Islam relies on a tradition of misogyny.

34 Valentine M. Moghadam, *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*, L. Rienner, Boulder, Colorado, 1993, pp. 5-8.

35 The veil here means the Islamic veil. In this respect, the Islamic veil and veiling are used interchangeably. In the later discussion, the Islamic veil will be addressed as simply the veil. As suggested by Fadwa El Guindi in *Veil Modesty Privacy and Resistance*, Berg, Oxford, 1999, the veil can appear in various forms from *khimar* (a head cover), *jilbab* (a long loose garment covering from head to toe, and face and feet are shown) to *burqa* (covering from head to toe including the face). The meaning of the veil is also ambiguous. At certain times and in certain places, it may refer to headscarf, a transparent head cover, even a very stylish headdress. Limiting the veil to a single reference obfuscates its various forms, different historical, social and cultural contexts, as well as political articulations. Veiling is the donning of the veil. The authors cited in the discussion are mainly from Middle Eastern countries.

36 Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite*, p. 85

37 *The Holy Qur'an, sura* 24: Al Nur: 31, translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, says: 'And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear. Thereof; that they should draw their veils [*khimar*] over their bosom and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers' or their brothers' sons.'

38 Another verse, *sura* 33: Al Ahzab: 59 says, 'O Prophet, thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments [*jilbab*] over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.'

39 Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil Modesty Privacy Resistance*, Berg, Oxford, 1999, p. 55.

40 Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, 'Entrepreneurial Women' in *Feminism and Islam Legal and Literary Perspectives*, Mai Yamani (ed.), Itacha Press, Reading UK, 1996, pp. 35-36.

41 Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and The Male A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, Mary Jo Lakeland (trans.), Addison-Wesley Publication Company, Inc., Reading, Massachusetts, 1991, pp. 180-181. Mernissi also admits that even the meaning of *jilbab* is not clearly defined. According to the *Lisan al-' Arab* dictionary, 'it can designate numerous pieces of clothing from a simple chemise to a cloak. (...) [it may mean] a very large piece of cloth worn by a woman; (...) a piece of cloth that a woman uses to cover her head and bosom.'

42 Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy, Resistance*, Oxford, New York, 1999.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 149.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 157.

46 Mackenzie Carpenter, 'Muslim Women Say Veil Is More About Expression Than Oppression'. *Post-Gazette*, Sunday, 28 October 2001, Internet, http://www.post-gazette.com, (16 November 2005).

47 David Hardaker, 'The Rise of the Anti-Osama', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 18, 2005.

48 Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, p. 152.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 154.

50 Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women: A Document in the History of Egyptian Feminism*, Samiha Sidhom Peterson (trans.)(trans.), The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 1992, pp. 35-45.

51 Ahmed, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

52 Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, p. 166.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 164. See also Azza Karam in 'Veiling, Unveiling and Meanings of the "veil"' in *Thamyris: Mythmaking From Past to Present* 3 (2) Autumn 1996, (p. 234). Karam addresses a similar issue as Ahmed. Based on her research of narrative discourses of immigrant Muslim women in Europe, she concludes that 'veiling is part of the ongoing power dynamic of competing discourses, especially discourses of resistance either to state interpretations or to hegemonic ideas.'

54 In Indonesian context, for example, the majority of Muslim women are not forced to wear a veil when in public places. However, there are cases when women are obliged to wear it, such as female students of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) or in regions where *shari'a* is applied. In the past, Muslim females were often known to wear *kerudung* (headscarf), which only covers the hair while the neck remains free. The veil in today's Indonesia differs from *kerudung* as the veil (Indonesians call it *jilbab*) covers exclusively the hair and the neck, only the face, the hands and the feet are to be shown. There are cases where *jilbab* wearers only show their eyes (the hair, the neck and the face and the whole body are covered).

55 Ahmed, *op. cit.*, p. 166.
56 El Guindi, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
57 Haideh Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis*, Zed Books, London, 1999.
58 Quoted in Moghissi, p. 41.
59 Quoted in Moghissi, p. 41
60 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
61 In Indonesia, the most visible example is Aceh where the *shari'a* is applied. In Banda Aceh, the province's capital, there are areas known as *Kawasan Wajib Jilbab* (*jilbab* compulsory areas). In these areas, women are obliged to wear *jilbab*, supervised by *shari'a* police officers. Fines are applicable when a Muslim woman is found not wearing it. The fines are not yet fully in practice; those found not wearing it are given a *jilbab* to cover their hair and necks.
62 Haleh Afhsar, 'Islam and Feminism: An Analysis of Political Strategies' in *Feminism and Islam*, p. 198.
63 *Ibid.*, p. 201.
64 Karam, *op.cit.*, p. 235.
65 Karin Ask and Marit Tjomsland, 'Introduction' in *Women and Islamization: Contemporary Dimensions of Discourse on Gender Relations*, Berg, Oxford, 1998, p. 13.
66 *Persis* website, Internet, http://www.persis.or.id, (17 November 2005). Persis is commonly perceived to be the most scripturalist of Indonesian reformists. It was established on 17 September 1923 in Bandung, West Java, by K.H. M. Zamzam and H. Muhammad Yunus with the purpose of having a unity of Islamic thought, view and voice.
67 Interview with a secondary school student on 10 July 2005.
68 Contemporary Indonesian men's Islamic clothing is named *baju koko* and it is similar to the Chinese peasant long-sleeved shirt and pants covering the whole body except for the hair, the face, hands and feet. This clothing consists of long-sleeved shirt and trousers or sarong. Its wearer often dons a special cap called *topi haji* (*haji* cap, a cap usually worn by Middle-Eastern Arabs).
69 Abdullahi Ahmed An Na'im, 'Toward an Islamic Reformation: Islamic Law in History and Society Today' in *Shari'a Law and the Modern Muslim State*, Norani Othman (ed.), Sisters in Islam, Kuala Lumpur, 1994, p. 11.
70 Malcolm H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1966, p. 21.
71 Asma Larif-Beatrix, 'Islamic Reform, Muslim Law and the Shari'a State' in *Shari'a Law and the Modern Muslim State*, p. 29.
72 John R. Bowen, 'Qur'an, Justice, Gender: Internal Debates in Indonesian Islamic Jurisprudence,' *History of Religion*, August 1998, v. 38 n. 1, p. 3. Italics mine. In the hierarchy of sources for Islamic laws or Islamic jurisprudence, Qur'an is the most important and *Sunna* comes in the second rank.
73 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
74 Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, 'Foreword' in *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History*, Amira El Azhary Sonbol (ed.)(ed.), Syracuse University Press, New York, 996, pp. ix-xx.
75 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
76 Amira Sonbol, 'Introduction' in *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History*, p. 11. The nation-state in Indonesia has tried to protect women's status through social welfare measures and the Marriage Act.
77 Barbara Stowasser, 'Women and Citizenship in the Qur'an' in *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History*.
78 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

79 Education here means modern education beyond women's education on domesticity.
80 Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women: A Document in the History of Egyptian Feminism (Tahrir-I al Mar'a)*. Samiha Sidhom Peterson (trans.), The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 1992.
81 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
82 *Ibid.*, p. 12-13.
83 Lila Abu-Lughod, 'The Marriage of Islamism and Feminism in Egypt: Selective Repudiation as a Dynamic of Postcolonial Cultural Politics' in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, Lila Abu-Lughod (ed.), Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1998.
84 *Ibid.*, p. 256. -
85 *Ibid.*, p. 256.
86 'About Face: An Inside Look at How Women Fared Under Taliban Oppression and What the Future Holds for Them Now', *Time*, December 3, 2001, v. 158, i24, p. 36.
87 Hind A. Khattab and Syeda Greiss el-Daeiff, 'Female Education in Egypt: Changing Attitudes over a Span of 100 Years' in *Muslim Women*, Freda Hussain (ed.), Croom Helm, London, 1984, p. 169.
88 Mahnaz Afkhami, 'Promoting Women's Rights in the Muslim World' in *Journal of Democracy*, January 1997, v. 8 n. 1, p. 161.
89 *Ibid.*, p. 161.
90 *Ibid.*, p. 161.
91 Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes', *Third World Women and The Politics of Feminism*, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (eds.), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1991, p. 54
92 Mohanty, 'Introduction: Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism,' *Third World Women and The Politics of Feminism*, p. 21.
93 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
94 Shahrzad Mojab, 'Theorizing the Politics of 'Islamic Feminism', *Feminist Review*, Winter 2001, no. 69, pp. 124-146.
95 *Ibid.*, pp. 130 - 131.
96 *Ibid.*, p. 131.
97 Quoted in Mojab, p. 131.
98 Quoted in Valentine Moghadam, 'Islamic Feminism and Its discontents: Toward a Resolution of the Debate', *Signs*, Summer 2002, v. 27 n. 14, pp. 1143.
99 Anouar Majid, 'The Politics of Feminism in Islam', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1998, vol. 23, no. 2, p. 324.
100 *Ibid.*, 324.
101 See Mernissi, 'Introduction: Was Benazir Bhutto the First?' in *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*.
102 Quoted in Majid, footnote no. 3, p. 324.
103 M. M. Charrad, 'Cultural Diversity Within Islam: Veils and Laws in Tunisia', *Women in Muslim Societies: Diversity Within Unity*, Herbert L. Bodman and Nayereh Tohidi (eds.), Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., Boulder, Colorado, 1998, p. 63.
104 Margot Badran, *Feminism, Islam and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1995.
105 Quoted in Mai Yamani, 'Introduction,' in *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives*, Mai Yamani (ed.), Itacha Press, Reading, UK, 1996, p. 1.
106 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
107 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
108 Badran, *Feminist, Islam and Nation*, p. 25.
109 Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, *In Search of Islamic Feminism: One Woman's Global Journey*, Double Day, New York, 1998, p. 421.

110 Dennis Kandiyoti, *Women, Islam and the State*, New York University Press, New York, 1990, pp. 2-3.
111 Haideh Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis*, Zed Books, London, 1999, p. 140.
112 Elizabeth Fernea, *In Search of Islamic Feminism*, p. 416.
113 *Ibid.*, pp. 421-422.
114 *Ibid.*, p. 422.
115 Lila Abu-Lughod, 'Feminist Longings and Postcolonial Conditions', *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, Lila Abu-Lughod (ed.)(ed.), Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1998, p. 23.
116 Fernea, p. 414.
117 Barbara Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'anic Traditions, an Interpretation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994, p. 196. Stowasser defines *ijtihad* as independent interpretation of scripture; independent, scripture-based, judgement in a legal or theological question.

Chapter 2

1 Soeratno, Siti Chamamah, 'Tanggapan Atas Pembicaraan Uka Tjandraasmita', *Ruh Islam Dalam Budaya Bangsa: Agama dan Problema Masa Kini*, Aswab Mahasin and others (eds.)(eds.), Yayasan Festival Istiqlal, Jakarta, 1996. Soeratno is Professor of Indonesian Literature in Gajah Mada University, Yogyakarta. She is also an activist in Muhammadiyah, a leading Islamic organisation.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 268.
3 See my discussion on Hodgson's and Madjid's use of 'Islamicate' and 'Islamic' in the previous chapter.
4 Asma Afsarudin, 'Introduction: The Hermeneutics of Gendered Space and Discourse', in *Hermeneutics and Honor: Negotiating Female 'Public' Space in Islamic/ate Societies*, Asma Afsarudin (ed.)(ed.), Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2000.
5 *Ibid.*, p. 4., Afsarudin grounds such characterisation on the shared characteristics of Islamic societies based on the definitions given by Mardin and Arkoun and claims colonial influences as all pervasive without any detailed study of Indonesian societies to support this argument.
6 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
7 Lies M. Marcoes, 'The Female Preacher as a Mediator in Religion: A Case Study in Jakarta and West Java' in *Women and Mediation in Indonesia*, Sita van Bemmelen, Madelon Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis, Elsbeth Locher-Scholten and Elly Touwen-Bouwsma (eds.)(eds.), KITLV Press, Leiden, 1992. Late 1990s, there were some writings on women and Islam in Indonesia such as by Andrée Feillard, 'Indonesia's Emerging Muslim Feminism: Women Leaders on Equality, Inheritance and Other Gender Issues', in *Studi Islamika*, vol. 4, no. 1, Jakarta, 1997, pp. 83-111, and 'The Veil and Polygamy: Current Debates on Women and Islam in Indonesia', in *Moussons*, no. 99, Marseille, 1995, pp. 5-27.
8 Dr. Achmad Satori Ismail, 'Fiqih Perempuan dan Feminisme' *Membincangkan Feminisme: Diskursus Gender Perspective Islam*, Tim Risalah Gusti (ed.)(ed.), Risalah Gusti, Jakarta, 2000, p. 144.
9 Saskia E. Wieringa in 'The Birth of the New Order State in Indonesia: Sexual Politics and Nationalism' defines *kodrati* as 'a religiously-inspired code of conduct based on women's intrinsic "nature". The *kodrat* of Indonesian women prescribed that they should be meek, passive, obedient to the male members of the family, sexually shy,

self-sacrificing and nurturing. To the end, their main vocation was wifehood and motherhood.' *Journal of Women History*, Spring 2003 vol. 15 issue 1, p. 74.

10 Johan Meuleman, 'Analisis Buku-Buku tentang Wanita Islam yang Beredar di Indonesia' in *Wanita Islam Indonesia Dalam Kajian Tekstual dan Kontekstual*, Lies. M Marcoes-Natsir and Johan Hendrik Meuleman (eds.)(eds.), INIS, Jakarta, 1993, p. 181.

11 Ahmad Zahro Al-Hasany, MA, 'Islam dan Perempuan (Diskursus Islam, RA Kartini dan Feminisme)', *Membincangkan Feminism*, p. 257.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 183.

13 Zainah Anwar, 'What Islam, Whose Islam?: Sisters in Islam and the Struggle for Women's rights' *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia*, Robert W. Hefner (ed.)(ed.), University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2001, p. 230.

14 More detailed who's who of writings on gender discourse in Indonesian Islam can be obtained from *Ulumul Qur'an*, Edisi Khusus, no. 5 & 6, vol. V, Tahun 1994, p. 3. It was Wardah Hafidz who first introduced Islamic feminism in Indonesia. See Hafidz, W. 'Feminism sebagai Counter-Culture'. *Ulumul Qur'an*, Edisi Khusus, no. 5 & 6, vol. V, Tahun 1994, p. 3.

15 The notion of 'the closure of the gates of *ijtihad*' in the thirteenth century remains debatable to this day. This closure was introduced by Al Ghazali who believed that too many people with inadequate Qur'anic knowledge were claiming to be *mujtahid* (interpreter of the Qur'anic exegeses), leading to wrongful interpretations of the Qur'an. He, then, called for a closing of the gates. As a great scholar, his call was followed by numerous *ulama*, however there were still many who disagreed with his calling. Ghazali is commonly followed today by conservative and orthodox *ulama*. Modernist and progressive Muslims believe that those gates have never been closed even when Ghazali made his call in the early twelfth century. The latter includes Imam al-Syaukani in mid eighteenth century declaring that the gates could never be closed, followed by the rector of Al-Azhar University Syekh Al-Maraghy. See KH Ibrahim Hosen, 'Taqlid dan Ijtihad Beberapa Pengertian Dasar', *Artikel Yayasan Paramadina*, Internet, http://media.isnet.org/islam/Paramadina/Konteks/TaqlidIH2.html, (30 November 2005).

16 KH A. Mustafa Bisri, 'Ini *Uqûd al-Lujjayn* Baru, Ini Baru '*Uqûd al-Lujjayn*', in *Wajah Baru Relasi Suami-Istri: Telaah Kitab 'Uqûd al-Lujjayn*, Forum Kajian Kitab Kuning (FK3), Lkis Yogyakarta, 2001, p. ix.

17 Masdar F. Mas'udi, 'Perempuan di antara Lembaran Kitab Kuning', *Membincang Feminism: Diskursus Gender Perspektif Islam*, Tim Risalah Gusti (eds.)(eds.), Risalah Gusti, Surabaya, 2000, p. 167.

18 *Wajah Baru Relasi Suami Istri*, p. 49.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

20 *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

21 Husein Muhammad, 'Pesantren and the Issue of Gender Relation', *Kultur: The Indonesian Journal for Muslim Cultures*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2002, pp. 77-79.

22 Today both IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta have been changed into UINs (*Universitas Islam Negeri*, Islamic State University): UIN Syarif Hidayatullah and UIN Sunan Kalijaga.

23 Interview with Lily Zakiyah Munir at her house in Cempaka Putih, South Jakarta, 25 August 2004.

24 Istiadah, *Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesia: Investigating Paths to Resist the Patriarchal System*, Working Paper No. 91, Monash University, Clayton Victoria, Australia, 1995, p.11.

25 Suryakusuma, J. I. 'The State and Sexuality in New Order Indonesia'. *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, Laurie J. Sears (ed.)(ed.), Duke University Press, Durham & London, 1996, pp. 92-119.
26 *Ulumul Qur'an* Edisi Khusus, No. 5 & 6, Vol. V, Tahun 1994.
27 Didin Syafrudin, 'Argumen Supremasi Atas Penafsiran Klasik QS al-Nisâ':34', *UQ*, Edisi Khusus, p.6.
28 'Perempuan Dalam Perbincangan', *UQ*, Edisi Khusus, p. 50.
29 Ratna Megawangi, 'Feminisme: Menindas Peran Ibu Rumahtangga', *UQ*, Edisi Khusus, p. 37. Megawangi is a lecturer in IPB (*Institut Teknologi Bandung*, Bandung Institute of Technology). Her speciality is food and nutrition policy. Claimed to be a follower of Sufism, her writings are much influenced by the teachings of Bawa Muhaiyaddeen. See her biography in *Membiarkan Berbeda: Sudut Pandang Baru tentang Relasi Gender*, Mizan Pustaka, Jakarta, 1999. This book, claiming to function as the counter-argument against feminism, Megawangi proposes a conservative view of gender relations: harmonious gender relations can be achieved if the nature of biological differences between man and woman are accorded similar respect.
30 'Feminisme Tidak Anti Peran Ibu Rumahtangga'. An interview with Myra Diarsi. *UQ*, Edisi Khusus, p. 33.
31 *Ibid*., p. 33.
32 *Tarbiyah* here is a name of a movement as opposed to the general meaning of *tarbiyah* (education).
33 Martin Van Bruinessen, 'Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia', *South East Asia Research* vol. 10, no. 2, 117-154, Internet, http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/genealogies_islamic_radicalism.htm, (8 December 2005).
'Post-Suharto Muslim Engagements with Civil Society and Democracy', paper presented at the Third International Conference and Workshop 'Indonesia in Transition', organised by the KNAW and Labsosio, Universitas Indonesia, August 24-28, 2003. Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Internet, http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/Post_Suharto_Islam_and_civil_society.htm, (8 December 2005).
34 *Ikhwanul Muslimin* is not only an organisation but also commonly regarded as a religious, political and social movement, calling for the return to an original Islam. Believing that most Muslims have been corrupted by Western influences, *Ikhwanul Muslimin* sees the Qu'ran and the *Sunnah* as laws mandated by God to be applied to all parts of the life of all Muslims, including the organisation of the government and the handling of everyday problems. Muslim Brotherhoods have since been established in Middle Eastern countries.
35 Ken Miichi, 'Islamic Youth Movements in Indonesia', *IIAS Newsletter*, No. 32, November 2003. See also Ali Said Damanik's publication *Fenomena Partai Keadilan Transformasi 20 Tahun Gerakan Tarbiyah di Indonesia*, Penerbit Teraju, Jakarta, 2002.
36 For comparison, PDI allocated 30% for female legislative candidates while PPP 25%. See 'Dilema Para Caleg Perempuan', *Pikiran Rakyat*, Sabtu 17 Januari 2004, Internet, http://www.pikiran-rakyat.com/cetak/0104/17/hikmah/lainnya04.htm, (9 December 2005).
37 Istiadah, pp. 7-8. Also see Masdar F. Mas'udi, 'Reinterpreting Islamic Teachings on Women', *Islam and the Advancement of Women*, Lily Zakiyah Munir, Abdul Mun'im D. Z., Nani Soraya (eds.)(eds.), The Forum for Islam and the Advancement of Women, Cv. Tunas Pribumi, Jakarta, 1994, pp. 15-31.
38 Lily Zakiyah Munir, ' "He is your garment and you are his (...)": Religious Precepts, Interpretations, and Powers in Relations in Marital Sexuality among Javanese Mus-

lim Women', *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, Oct 2002, vol.17, issue 2, p. 205.

39 Didin Syafrudin, p. 10. Translation mine. Didin Syafrudin is a lecturer at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta (formerly IAIN Jakarta). He has written numerous articles on the 'woman's question' in Islam. Syarudin's interpretation of this verse is grounded upon Rahman's, Wadud's, and in particular Engineer's reading of the verse, saying that '*bimâ fadhdhalallâh lahum 'ala ba'dh* (karena Dia (Allah) telah melebihkan sebagian mereka (laki-laki) atas sebagian (yang lain).'

40 Istiadah, p. 8.

41 Dr. Hj. Zaitunah Subhan, *Tafsir Kebencian: Studi Bias Gender Dalam Tafsir Qur'an*, LkiS, Yogyakarta, 1999.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 179.

43 Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender: Perspektif Al-Qur'an*, Penerbit Paramadina, Jakarta, 2001.

44 Nasaruddin Umar. *Qur'an Untuk Perempuan*, Jaringan Islam Liberal dan Teater Utan Kayu, Jakarta, 2002.

45 Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, 'Qur'an Untuk Kaum Perempuan' in Nasaruddin Umar's *Qur'an Untuk Perempuan*, Jaringan Islam Liberal and Teater Utan Kayu, Jakarta, 2002, p. vii.

46 Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender: Perspektif Al-Qur'an*, p. 37.

47 Masdar F. Mas'udi, *Islam dan Hak-Hak Reproduksi Perempuan: Dialog Fiqih Pemberdayaan*, Penerbit Mizan, Jakarta, 1997.

48 Saparinah Sadli, 'Sekapur Sirih', *Islam dan Hak-Hak Reproduksi Perempuan*.

49 Maftuchad Yusuf, 'Muslim Outlook on the Family in a Changing Society' in *Perempuan, Agama dan Pembangunan: Wacana Kritik Atas Peran dan Kepemimpinan Wanita*, Lembaga Studi dan Inovasi Pendidikan, Yogyakarta, 2000, p. 108. Yusuf is a lecturer in *Universitas Negeri Jakarta* (Jakarta State University, formerly IKIP Jakarta), she is also an activist at the Asian and World Conference on Religion for Peace.

50 Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, 'Kedudukan Wanita Dalam Perspective Islam (Makalah Pembanding atas Makalah Bustanul Arifin)', *Wanita Islam Indonesia Dalam Kajian Tekstual dan Kontekstual*, p. 60.

51 Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, 'Marital Rape, Suatu Keniscayaan?' *Islam dan Konstruksi Seksualitas*, Edy Santosa (ed.)(ed.), PSW IAIN Yogyakarta, The Ford Foundation and Pustaka Pelajar, Yogyakarta, 2002, p. 120.

52 Farha Ciciek, 'Perkosaan terhadap Perempuan di Ruang Domestik dan Publik, in *Islam dan Konstruksi Seksualitas*, p. 114.

53 Dzuhayatin, 'Marital Rape Suatu Keniscayaan?' pp.123–124.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 129.

55 Al Qur'an *Sura* 2 Al Baqarah: 187, in which Yusuf Ali elucidates: 'Men and women are each other's garment: i.e. they are for mutual support, mutual comfort, and mutual protection, fitting into each other as a garment fits the body. The question of sex is always delicate to handle: here we are told that even in such matters a clear, open, and honest course is better than fraud or self-deception.'

56 *Jilbab* and the veil or veiling in this discussion will be used interchangeably. As various as its meanings, it also comes in various forms and styles. This discussion will not include the variety of its forms and styles because the purpose of this discussion is to provide a general perspective of the veiling movement in Indonesia. In this respect, its various forms and styles are discarded.

57 Nasaruddin Umar, 'Fenomenology Jilbab,' *Kompas Cyber Media*, Monday, 25 November 2002.

58 Suzanne Brenner, 'Reconstructing Self and Society: Javanese Muslim Women and "the Veil"', *American Ethnologist*, November 1996, vol. 23, no. 4, p. 673.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 684.

60 Lily Munir (2002) quoted in Sri Rahayu Arman, 'Jilbab: Antara Kesucian dan Resistansi,' *Jaringan Islam Liberal*, Internet, http://www.islamlib.com, (21 March 2003).
61 In Indonesia, discourses on the veil are formulated in two divergent arguments; those who oblige it and those against it. Writings on both views are easily accessible (and abundant), either in Indonesian translation of Arabic sources, or in writings by Indonesian Muslim scholars. It is impossible to mention each work here.
62 Umar, 'Fenomenologi Jilbab,' p. 1.
63 Budhi Munawar-Rachman, 'Penafsiran Islam Liberal atas Isu-Isu Gender dan Feminisme' in *Islam Pluralis: Wacana Kesetaraan Kaum Beriman*, Penerbit Paramadina, Jakarta, 2001, p. 391.
64 Wardah Hafidz, 'Feminism sebagai Counter-Culture', *UQ*, Edisi Khusus, p. 3.
65 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Chapter 3

1 Winarto, I. *Women Writers in Post-War Indonesia: An Analysis of the Works of Five Prominent Women Writers*. University of Sydney, M.A. Qualifying Thesis, 1976.
2 Katrin Bandel, 'Sastra Koran di Indonesia' in *Sastra, Perempuan, Sex*, Jalasutra, Yogyakarta, 2006, pp. 45-56.
3 Toeti Heraty, 'Women's Issues in a Patriarchal Society: Novels by Indonesian Women' in *Emergent Voices: Southeast Asian Women Novelists*, Thelma B. Kintanar, Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, Koh Tai Ann, Toeti Heraty, University of the Philippines Press, Diliman, Quezon City, 1994, p. 122.
4 *Ibid.*, p. 124.
5 *Ibid.*, p. 125.
6 Tineke Hellwig, *In the Shadow of Change: Images of Women in Indonesian Literature*, Monograph no. 35, Centers for South and Southeast Asia Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 1994, p. 185.
7 Krishna Sen, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order*, Zed Books, London, 1994, pp. 131-156.
8 Hellwig, *op cit*, p. 182.
9 Michael Bodden and Tineke Hellwig, 'Introduction', *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, vol. 41, no. 2 (2007), p. 9. It should be noted that *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* (RIMA) in this issue is designated specially to writings concerning the literary and theatrical works from the post-1998 period.
10 The word *canon* here is used to mean 'mainstream' meaning books widely read, very popular and that have often become 'the talk of the town'. *Canon* itself is a problematic term as it is indefinable: *canon* by whom, whose definition, whose categorisation, whose politics etc. are far from consensus.
11 Korrie Layun Rampan, *Angkatan 2000 Dalam Sastra Indonesia*, PT. Grasindo, Jakarta, 2000, p. iv.
12 Lie Hua, 'Sastrawangi': RI's 'chick lit' or literature lite? *The Jakarta Post*, 27 October 2004, Internet, http://www.thejakartapost.com, (17 April 2005).
13 Barbara Hatley, 'Literature, Mythology and Regime Change: Some Observations on Recent Indonesian Women's Writings,' in *Women in Indonesia: Gender Equity and Development*, Kathryn Robinson and Sharon Bessel (eds.)(eds.), Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2002, p. 131.
14 Taufiq Ismail, 'Pidato Kebudayaan Budidaya Malu Dikikis Habis Gerakan Syahwat Merdeka.' http://www.republika.co.id/koran_detail.asp?id=276485&kat_id=3, 20 Desember 2006, Internet, (19 March 2008).

15 In Taufiq's words *sastra syahwat* or *sastra selangkang* means writings merely talk about sex, and sexual taboos. Taufiq parallels this writing with pornography.
16 Taufiq Ismail, 'Pidato Kebudayaan: Budidaya Malu Dikikis Habis Gerakan Syahwat Merdeka.' http://www.republika.co.id/koran_detail.asp?id=276485&kat_id=3, 20 Desember 2006, Internet, (19 March 2008); Muhammad Subarkah, 'Gerakan Syahwat Merdeka Mengepung Indonesia,' *Republika*, Jumat, 22 Desember 2006; Hudan Hidayat, 'Sastra yang Hendak Menjauh dari Tuhannya,' *Jawa Pos*, Minggu, 06 Mei 2007; Taufiq Ismail, 'HH dan Gerakan Syahwat Merdeka,' *Jawa Pos*, Minggu, 17 Juni 2007; Hudan Hidayat, 'Nabi tanpa Wahyu,' *Jawa Pos*, 1 Juli 2007; M. Faizi, 'Hudan, Taufiq, dan Generasi Nol Buku,' *Jawa Pos*, Minggu, 08 Juli 2007; Mariana Amiruddin, 'Perkosaan Teks-Teks Sastra Tanggapan tulisan Taufiq Ismail,' *Jawa Pos*, Minggu, 15 Juli 2007; Viddy AD Daery, 'Gerakan Sastra Anti Neo-Liberalisme,' *Republika*, Minggu, 01 Juli 2007; Muhidin M Dahlan, 'Proyek Lekra Yang Teralpa: Ismail dan Pelacur Kencur Samaritan Girl Sutradara Kim Ki Duk,' *Media Indonesia*, Minggu, 8 Juli 2007; Firman Venayaksa, 'Jurnal Bumipoetra, Liberalisme dan Ode Kampung, *Republika*, Minggu, 08 Juli 2007; Veven Sp Wardhana, 'Sastra Perlawanan Terhadap 'Neo-Takhyul',' *Republika*, Minggu, 15 Juli 2007; Mahdiduri, 'Sastra Indonesia dalam Skenario Imperialisme,' *Republika*, Minggu, 22 Juli 2007.
17 Dwi Fitria, 'Bukan Sekedar Eksploitasi Tubuh, Jurnal Nasional, Minggu, 10 Februari 2008, Internet, http://jurnalnasional.com/?med=Koran%20Harian&sec=Gelanggang&rbrk=&id=34825 (22 October 2008).
18 Bodden and Hellwig, 'Introduction,' *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, vol. 41, no. 2 (2007), p. 9.
19 M. Faizi, 'Hudan, Taufiq, dan Generasi Nol Buku,' *Jawa Pos*, Minggu, 08 Juli 2007.
20 Freidus, A.J. *Sumatran Contributions to the Development of Indonesian Literature, 1920-1942*. The University of Hawaii Press, Hawaii, 1977.
21 'Kisah Keseharian Perempuan dari Langit', *Kompas Cyber Media*, 17 April 2004, Internet, http://www.kompas.com, (20 April 2005).

Chapter 4

1 Budi Dharma, 'Ada Apa Dengan Sastra Kita?' Tempo Interaktif, Edisi. 44/XXXII/29 Desember - 04 Januari 2004, Internet, http://www.tempointeraktif.com/hg/mbmtempo/arsip/2003/12/29/KL/mbm.20031229.kl8.id (22 October 2008).
2 Helvy Tiana Rosa, 'Lagi, Soal Sastra Islam', *Segenggam Gumam: Esai Esai tentang Sastra dan Kepenulisan*, Syaamil, Bandung, 2003, pp. 1-11.
3 Korrie Layun Rampan, 'Wanita Cerpenis Indonesia', in K.L. Rampan (ed.)(ed.). *Dunia Perempuan Antologi Cerita Pendek Wanita Cerpenis Indonesia*. Bentang Budaya, Jakarta, 2002, pp. ix-xxvi.
4 This career links her with another prominent author, NH. Dini, who also once worked as a flight attendant.
5 Reduction of family size shows rapid demographic changes that must influence women's time spent with the family.
6 It should be noted that imposed family planning might also jeopardise women's agency if they have no say about their reproduction rights.
7 'Education about Asia', vol. 6, no. 1, Spring 2001, p. 1, http://www.aasianst.org/EAA/her.htm
8 'Titis Basino P.I.,' *Profil Perempuan Pengarang Peneliti Penerbit di Indonesia*, Korrie Layun Rampan, Titiek WS, Matheus Elanda Rosi Ds (eds.)(eds.), Kelompok Cinta Baca, Jakarta, 2000, p. 411.
9 *Ibid.*, p. 410.

10 Titis, *Profil Pengarang*, p. 411.
11 An interview with Titis Basino in the foyer of Pusat Dokumentasi Sastra H.B. Jassin, Jakarta, 1 June 2004.
12 Interview with Titis Basino, 1 June 2004.
13 Interview with Titis Basino, 1 June 2004.
14 Ratna Indraswati Ibrahim, *Sastra Dan Gerakan Perempuan*, paper presented on a seminar held by *Jawa Pos*, 19 April 2003 in Graha Pena Surabaya, p. 1.
15 Ratna, *Ibid.*, p. 2.
16 An Interview with Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim, 20 July 2004 at her home in Jl. Diponegoro No. 3, Malang, East Java. Translation mine.
17 Interview with Ratna, 20 July 2004.
18 Eko Bambang Subiantoro, 'Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim; Menulis Cerpen Mengabarkan Kenyataan', *Jurnal Perempuan* No. 23, 2002, pp. 103-114.
19 Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim, *Sastra dan Gerakan Perempuan*, p. 2.
20 Interview with Ratna, 20 July 2004.
21 Interview with Ratna, 20 July 2004.
22 Interview with Ratna, 20 July 2004. *Bahasa perempuan* here is not meant to be congruent with *écriture feminine* (women's writing) of French theorists such as Héléne Cixous, Luce Irigaray or others. According to Ratna, female language here means the language used by women to express women's experiences.
23 Korrie Layun Rampan, *Angkatan 2000 dalam Sastra Indonesia*, PT Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia, Jakarta, 2000.
24 If *santri* is gender-neutral, s*antriwan* is male and *santriwati* is female.
25 The total fertility rate of those born post-1970s declined from 5.6 children per family in 1967-70 to 2.85 children in 1994. An Indonesian family with parents aged 30s-40s today commonly does not have more than three children, and seemingly the younger generations will continue to do so for decades to come. 'Indonesia Family Planning, Family Welfare and Women's Activities', *Family Health International*, Internet, http://www.fhi.org/en/RH/Pubs/wsp/fctshts/Indonesia1.htm, (28 December 2005).
26 Back cover of *Geni Jora* by Abidah El Khalieqy, Matahari, Yogyakarta, 2004.
27 Interview with Abidah El Kalieqy, 7 July 2004 at her home in Maguwo, Yogyakarta.
28 Interview with Abidah, 7 July 1995.
29 Interview with Abidah, 7 July 2004. Abidah's definition of female language is similar to Ratna's.
30 Interview with Abidah, 7 July 2004.
31 Helvy Tiana Rosa, 'Napas Saya Tidak Panjang, *Koran Tempo*, Oktober 2003, p.16.
32 This website is currently inaccessible.
33 Although Helvy was once a member of PKS (a political party) board of advisory, she refused to be called a political activist. In an interview, she revealed that she would prefer to be known as a writer who has strong concerns about women's inferior position in Islamic societies. She never mentions herself as a political activist. Her involvement with PKS was because
she was doing a favour to friends: it was only temporary, and unintended. She said that she would rather stay away from any political involvement.
34 'Pengantar' in *Sebab Sastra yang Merenggutku dari Pasrah*, Helvy Tiana Rosa, Gunung Djati, Jakarta, 1999, p. 4.
35 Interview with Helvy Tiana Rosa, 4 June 2004, at *Universitas Indonesia*, Jakarta. Translation mine.
36 'Helvy Tiana Rosa' in *Profil Perempuan Pengarang Peneliti Penerbit di Indonesia*, p. 156-157.
37 Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, Methuen, New York and London, 1987, p. 79.

38 Interview with Helvy, 4 June 2004.
39 Interview with Helvy, 4 June 2004.
40 Interview with Helvy, 4 June 2004.

Chapter 5

1 Katrin Bandel, 'Religiusitas Dalam Novel Tiga Pengarang Perempuan Indonesia,' *Sastra, Perempuan, Seks*, Jalasutra, Yogyakarta, 2006, pp. 67-90.
2 'Cendekiawan Muslim Milik Bangsa', *Ensiklopedi Tokoh Indonesia*, Internet, http://www.tokohindonesia.com/ensiklopedi/n/nurcholis-madjid/index.shtml, (4 January 2006).
3 *Tidak Ada Negara Islam: Surat-surat Politik Nurcholish Madjid - Mohamad Roem*, Agus Edi Santoso (ed.)(ed.) with an introduction by Ahmad Syafii Maarif dan Adi Sasono, Djambatan, Jakarta, 1997.
4 Nurcholis Madjid, *Dialog Keterbukaan: Artikulasi Nilai Islam dalam Wacana Sosial Politik Kontemporer*, introduction by Fachry Ali, 1st Printing, Jakarta, Paramadina, 1998. Also, Andi Faizal Bakti, 'Nurcholis Madjid and the Paramadina Foundation', *IIAS Newsletter*, No 34, July 2004, p. 22.
5 R. William Liddle, 'Media Dakwah Scripturalism: One form of Islamic Political Thought and Action in New Order Indonesia', *Toward a New Paradigm: Recent Developments of Indonesian Islamic Thought*, Mark R. Woodward (ed.)(ed.), Arizona State University Program for Southeast Asian Studies, Tempe, Arizona, 1996, pp. 323-356. In this article Liddle still uses DD for *Dewan Dakwah* while now it is commonly known as DDII (*Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia*).
6 *Pleidoi Sastra Kontroversi Cerpen Langit Makin Mendung Kipandjikusmin*, Muhidin M. Dahlan and Mujib Hermani (eds.)(eds.), Melibas, Jakarta, 2004. This book includes the short story *Langit Makin Mendung* and other stories by Kipandjikusmin and all the newspapers articles about the controversies of this story.
7 Kipandjikusmin's explanation was published in Harian *KAMI* 26 October 1968, and Jassin's in *KAMI*, 24 October 1968. These quotes are taken from an article by Tjahjo Nuswantoro 'Langin Makin Mendung: Mempersonifikasikan Tuhan', *Adil* (Solo), Tahun 37 No. 14, 19 November 1968, in *Pleidoi Sastra*, pp. 220 - 221.
8 A. Teeuw, *Modern Indonesian Literature*, pp. 138-139.
9 See my discussion on Islamic writings in previous chapters.
10 *Atheist*, Achdiat K. Mihardja, R. J. Maguire (trans.)(trans.), University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Queensland, 1972, p. 179.
11 See my previous discussion on the core of Islamic theology in chapter 1.
12 A. A. Navis, 'The Decline and Fall of Our Local Mosque', p. 125, in *From Surabaya to Armageddon: Indonesian Short Stories*, Harry Aveling (ed. and trans.), Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Hongkong, 1976.
13 An interview with Mustafa Bisri in *Wajah Wajah Muslim Indonesia* (Faces of Indonesia's Muslims), a documentary film produced by Media Alliance and Metro TV PT. Media Televisi Indonesia, 2004. This film contains interviews with Indonesian Muslim scholars on various subjects such as gender issues, education, the role of Islam in Indonesian politics and economics and so forth. Interview with Mustafa Bisri is in *Episode 3: Nafas Islam pada Seni dan Budaya di Indonesia* (The Spirit of Islam in Art and Culture in Indonesia).
14 *Ibid.*
15 An interview with Arahmaini is in *Episode 3: Nafas Islam pada Seni dan Budaya di Indonesia* (The Spirit of Islam in Art and Culture in Indonesia), in *Wajah Wajah Muslim Indonesia* (Faces of Indonesia's Muslims).

16 Kenneth M. George, 'Designs on Indonesia's Muslim Communities', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (August 1998), p. 697. George defines *mushaf* as: 'a written incarnation of the official closed corpus of the Qur'an and commonly graced with artful calligraphic styled and deeply textured illuminations. It must be written in Arabic, authenticated and inspected for errors by Qur'anic scriptural authorities' (p. 694).
17 Islamic teen novels.
18 M.B. Hooker, *Indonesian Islam: Social Change through Contemporary Fatãwã*, Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen & Unwin and University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2003, p. 125.
19 *Sinetron* is the Indonesian term for soap opera on television. It is an acronym for cinema electronic.
20 Interview with Titis Basino P.I., on 10 February 2005.
21 Titis Basino P.I., *Menyucikan Perselingkuhan*, Grasindo, Jakarta, 1998, on the back cover.
22 *Ibid*, p. 187.
23 Titis, *Menyucikan Perselingkuhan*, p. 105. Italics mine.
24 Titis Basino, *Dari Lembah ke Coolibah*, Grasindo, Jakarta, 1997, p. 95.
25 Murata, S. *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought*. State University of New York Press, Albany, 1992, pp. 92-93.
26 Titis Basino, *Dari Lembah Ke Coolibah*, Grasindo, Jakarta, p. 149, and *Welas Asih*, p. 141.
27 *Welas Asih*, p. 139.
28 Murata, p. 227.
29 *Ibid.*, p. 187.
30 Titis Basino, *Di Bumi Aku Bersua Di Langit Aku Bertemu*, Pustaka Jaya, Jakarta, 1983, p. 161.
31 Khaled Abou El Fadal, *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2004, p. 110.
32 *Kompas Cyber Media*, 29 November 2004, Internet, http://www.kompas.com/gayahidup/news/0411/29/035011.htm. (29 November 2004)
33 Polygamy Award is an award given to the best practitioner of polygamy (men only).
34 *The Wall Street Journal*, 24 November 2003, Internet, http://www.polygamyinfo.com/intnalmedia%20plyg%20216wallstreet.htm. (25 February 2005)
35 'Siti Musdah Mulia: Poligami Haram karena Eksesnya' *Tempo*, 11-17 Oktober 2004, p. 120.
36 *The Jakarta Post online*, 28 October 2004, Internet, http://www.thejakartapost.com/detailnational.asp?fileid=20041028.CO3&irec=2, (28 October 2004)
37 'Dari Poligami sampai Kawin Beda Agama,' *Tempo*, 11-17 Oktober 2004, p. 121.
38 'Poligami a la 'Feminis', Julia Suryakusuma, Internet, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/islamliberal/message/7753, (2 March 2005)
39 Titis Basino, 'Her', *In the Surau: Seven Islamic Short Stories From Indonesia*, eds. Soejono Dardjowidjojo and Florence Lamoureux, Southeast Asia Paper No. 21, Southeast Asian Studies, Centre for Asian and Pacific Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1983, p.38.
40 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
41 *Ibid.*, p. 41
42 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
43 Titis Basino P.I., *Aku Supiyah Istri Hardhian*, Grasindo, Jakarta, 1998, p. 66.
44 Titis Basino P.I., *Tersenyum pun Tidak Untukku Lagi*, Jakarta, 1998, p. 143.
45 Titis Basino P.I., *Pelabuhan Hati*, Pustaka Jaya, Jakarta, 1978, p. 18.
46 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

47 *Sura* An-Nisaa verse 3, *The Holy Qur'an: English Translation of the Meaning and Commentaries*, King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, Al-Madinah A-Munawarah, Saudi Arabia, 1410H, p. 206.
48 Cheryl Benard, *Civil Democratic Islam Partners, Resources, and Strategies*, RAND, National Security Research Division, Santa Monica, CA, 2003, p. 16.
49 'Poligami sebagai Bentuk Kekerasan yang Paling Nyata atas Harkat dan Martabat Perempuan sebagai Manusia di dalam Hukum, Sosial Budaya dan Agama', Cuplikan Siaran Pers LBH-APIK tanggal 24 Juli 2003, *Jurnal Perempuan*, No. 31, 2003, p. 119.
50 Vony Reyneta, 'Kebijakan Poligami: Kekerasan Negara Terhadap Perempuan', *Jurnal Perempuan*, No 31, 2003, p. 12.
51 Interview with Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim, 12 February 2005.
52 The 1997 census by BPS Indonesia stated that 53.46% per 100,000 population in rural areas, and 46.52% of urban areas were household victims –as women are more likely to be victims of domestic violence, it is assumed that the number presented undeniably refers to females. BPS Statistics Indonesia, Internet, http://www.bps.go.id/sector/socwel/table6.shtml, (2 February 2005).
53 Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim, 'Secangkir Kopi', *Noda Pipi Seorang Perempuan*, Tiga Serangkai, Solo, 2003, p. viii.
54 Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim, 'Noda Pipi Seorang Perempuan', *Noda Pipi Seorang Perempuan*, pp. 9 - 13.
55 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
56 Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim, 'Rambutnya Juminten' in *Lakon Di Kota Kecil*, Penerbit Jendela, Yogyakarta, 2002, pp. 68-75.
57 Ratna Indraswati Ibrahim, 'Secangkir Kopi – Pengantar Penulis', *Lakon Di Kota Kecil*, pp. ix-xi.
58 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, New York, London, 1990, pp. 114 - 115.
59 *Sura* An-Nur verse 31, *The Holy Qur'an: English Translation of the Meaning and Commentaries*, King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, Al-Madinah A- Munawarah, Saudi Arabia, 1410H, p. 1012.
60 Ratna, 'Lebur', *Aminah Di Satu Hari*, Galang Press, Yogyakarta, 2002, pp. 87-95.
61 *Ibid.*, pp. 87-94.
62 Ratna, 'Bunga Mentega,' *Aminah di Satu Hari*, pp. 41-51.
63 *Ibid*, p. 45.
64 *Ibid.*, p. 42.
65 *Ibid.*, p. 43.
66 Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim, *Bukan Pinang Dibelah Dua*, Grasindo, Jakarta, 2003.
67 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
68 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
69 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
70 *Ibid.*, p. 83.
71 William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiation of Political Paradox*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1991.
72 In Indonesia, Chinese descendants are believed to be ethnically rather than racially different. Racial difference is only applied to Westerners whose appearance is racially Caucasian.
73 Ratna, *Lemah Tanjung*, Grasindo, Jakarta, 2003, p. 8.
74 *Ibid.*,p.21
75 Interview with Ratna Indraswati Ibrahim, 20 July 2004.
76 *Ibid.*, p. 89.
77 *Ibid.*, p 376.
78 *Ibid.*, p. 265.

79 Interview with Ratna, 20 July 2004.
80 *Ibid.*
81 *Totok* and *peranakan* are the two major labels. *Totok* commonly refers to China-born recent Chinese migrants to Indonesia, who still speak Chinese: *peranakan* or *keturunan* are acculturated ethnic Chinese. Yet another label is *Cina perantauan*, meaning migrated Chinese.
82 Michael Jacobsen, 'Islam and Processes of Minorisation among Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia: Oscillating between Faith and Political Expediency', *Asian Ethnicity*, Volume 6, Number 2, June 2005, pp. 71-85.
83 *Ibid.*, p. 83.
84 *Lemah Tanjung*, p. 15.
85 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
86 *Lemah Tanjung*, p. 9.

Chapter 6

1 Abidah El Khalieqy, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, Yayasan Kesejahteraan Fatayat, Yogyakarta, 20001, p. 51.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
4 *Ibid.*, p. 43.
5 *Ibid.*, p. 85.
6 Interview with Abidah, 7 July 2004.
7 UNICEF, Internet, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/indonesia_statistics.html1/#1, (2 May 2005).
8 Susan Blackburn, *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 155-162.
9 *Ibid.*, p. 162.
10 Leukorrhea may occur at any age and affects most women at some point. It is a non-blood vaginal discharge, which may be normal, or represent minimal pathological changes from various causes. Leukorrhea during mature periods, before or after menstruation, or during pregnancy without any other symptoms or odour, is normal vaginal discharge. Once it is persistent and accompanied by other symptoms, such as pain and itchiness, then it may be a pathological reaction, an early symptom of more serious diseases, such as reproduction organ diseases or liver, kidney and heart disorders. See http://www.martha-tilaar.com/indo/perlutahu/perlutahu_07.shtml.
11 An Interview with Sri Endah Kinasih, a researcher at the Women's Studies Centre of Airlangga University, Surabaya, Indonesia, 23 April 2004.
12 Irfan Abubakar, 'Islam and Gender Books Published in Indonesia (1990-2003)', *Kultur The Indonesian Journal For Muslim Cultures*, Volume 2, No 2, 2002, p. 138.
13 Abidah, *Perempuan*, p. 259
14 K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, 'Islam dan Hak Reproduksi Perempuan: Perspektif Fiqih,' *Menakar Harga Perempuan Eksplorasi Lanjut atas Hak-Hak Reproduksi Perempuan dalam Islam*, Syafiq Hasyim (ed.)(ed.), Penerbit Mizan, Jakarta, 2002, pp. 113-118.
15 *Al Qu'ran*, *Sura* Al-Nisa verse 19, and *Sura* Luqman verse 14.
16 *Sura* An-Nisa verse 4.
17 Hussein Muhammad, 'Refleksi Teologis tentang Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan', *Menakar Harga Perempuan*, p. 203-212. *Nusyuz* is controversial in its nature. Interpretations of this term vary between *ulama*. Generally it is understood that "to beat" his wife, a husband must not harm her physically, and it is best not to use "the right."
18 K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, p. 114.

19 Hakimi Mohammad, Elli Nur Hayati, V. Utari Marlinawati, Anna Winkvist, Mary C. Elsberg, *Silence for the Sake of Harmony: Domestic Violence and Health in Central Java*, CHN-RL GMU, Yogyakarta, Rifka Annisa Women's Crisis Center Yogyakarta, Umeå University, Sweden, Women's Health Exchange & Program for Appropriate Technology in Health, USA, 2001. The research sample was 13,094 women at their reproduction age 15-49 years. The research area was Purworejo Distrct in Central Java.
20 *Ibid.*, p. 77.
21 *Ibid.*, p. 85.
22 Abidah El Khalieqy, *Geni Jora*, Matahari, Yogyakarta, 2004.
23 'Pengantar Penerbit,' *Geni Jora*.
24 Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self Representation*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1987, pp. 45-46.
25 Abidah, *Geni Jora*, p. 32.
26 *Ibid.*, p. 54.
27 *Ibid.*, p. 62.
28 *Ibid.*, p. 144.
29 *Ibid.*, p. 141.
30 *Ibid.*, p. 214.
31 *Ibid.*, p. 215.
32 UNICEF, Internet, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/indonesia.html, (5 May 2005). 'Conflict areas' (daerah konflik) refers to regions across Indonesia where numerous conflicts ranging from ethnic, religious and ideological occur. Regions such as Sampit, Poso, Ambon, Aceh, Papua are the most notable conflict areas.
33 Ariel Heryanto, 'Setengah Tiang', *Kompas Cyber Media*, Minggu, 15 Mei 2005, Internet, http://www.kompas.com/kompas-cetak/0505/15/naper/1748927.htm, (15 May 2005).
34 Melani Budianta, Ph.D., 'Beyond Tears and Anger: Representations of Violence Against Women (A Reflection)', *Kultur The Indonesian Journal for Muslim Cultures*, Volume 2, Number 2, 2002, p. 56.
35 Melani Budianta, 'Beyond Tears and Anger', p. 47.
36 Rosnani Sahardin, 'Sudahkan Status Perempuan Itu Berubah?', *Jurnal Perempuan*, No. 24, p. 7. There are two special editions of Jurnal Perempuan focusing on women in conflict areas: *Perempuan di Wilayah Konflik* (Women in Conflict Areas), *Jurnal Perempuan*, No. 24, 2002, and *Perempuan Dan Pemulihan Konflik* (Women and Conflict Recovery), *Jurnal Perempuan* No. 33, 2004.
37 Helvy Tiana Rosa, 'Jaring-Jaring Merah,' *Lelaki Kabut dan Boneka (Dolls and the Man of Mist) Kumpulan Cerpen Pilihan Dwi-bahasa*, Asy Syamil, Bandung, 2002. This short story collection was written in Indonesian and has been translated into English. Except for the title, the quotes taken from this collection are from its English translation.
38 Rosnani Sahardin, 'Sudahkan Status Perempuan Itu Berubah?', pp. 10-11.
39 Helvy, 'The Red Net', p. 100.
40 Helvy, 'The Red Net', p. 102.
41 Julius Lawalata, 'Fakta Tak Terlihat Posisi Perempuan Dalam Konflik Sosial Maluku,' *Jurnal Perempuan* No. 33, 2004, pp. 10-13. His study shows that around 75% of the victims in Moluccan conflicts are women, and this percentage is similar in other conflict areas.
42 Tabrani Yunus, 'Petaka Bagi Perempuan: Pemahaman Baru Konflik Politik Bersenjata di Aceh', quoted in Julius Lawalata, p. 13.
43 [1]Julius Lawalata, pp. 11-12.
44 *Ibid.*, p.13.

45 Jacques Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 214.
46 Jacques, Bertrand, 'Legacies of the Authoritarian Past: Religious Violence in Indonesia's Moluccan Islands', *Pacific Affairs*, Spring 2002, 75, 1, p. 62.
47 *Ibid.*, p. 85.
48 Julius Lawalata, Fakta Tak Terlihat, *Jurnal Perempuan*, p.10.
49 Helvy, 'Because I am the Wind Because I am Love', *Lelaki Kabut dan Boneka*, pp. 142-143.
50 Beheading or *mangayau* is a common way for the Dayaks to kill someone.
51 Helvy, *Darahitam*, p. 120.
52 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. and extended ed., Verso, London, New York, 1991.
53 *Ibid*, p. 121. The Dayaks believe that they can identify the Madurese and any other ethnic group from the smell of their blood. This is difficult to understand if one is not of Dayak origin.
54 Mita Noveria and Haning Romdiati, 'Kehidupan Pada Masa Pemulihan: Kasus Perempuan Korban Kerusuhan Sambas di Kabupaten Pontianak', *Jurnal Perempuan*, No. 33, p. 39.
55 *Ibid.*, p. 117 and p. 121.
56 *Ibid.*, p. 142.
57 All these stories are collected in *Ketika Mas Gagah Pergi*, Asy Syaamil, Bandung, 2000.
58 Hevy, *Maut di Kamp Loka*, p. 52.
59 Helvy, *Je Ne Te Quite Jamais, Palestine*, p. 121.
60 Helvy, *Bait-bait Aku, Ayah dan Dudayev*, p. 96.
61 John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, pp. 27-28.
62 'Education, and Accessibility to Mass-Media', BPS Statistics Indonesia, Internet, http://www.bps.go.id, (2 February 2005 and 30 May 2005).
63 Amin Sweeney, *A Full Hearing: Orality and Literacy in the Malay World*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1987.
64 Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text,' in *Image Music Text*, Stephen Heath (trans.) (trans.), Fontana Press, London, 1977.
65 At least 3 IAINs are still supervised by the Ministry of Religious Affairs; IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, and STAIN Malang (*Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri*, State Islamic Higher Education) have become public universities and renamed as UINs (*Universitas Islam Negeri*, State Islamic University). These UINs have similar faculties to other public universities under the Ministry of National Education. However, IAIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, as are most of the IAINs and STAINs across Indonesia, is still in the process of change. Some UINs and IAINs have also non-Islamic affiliated faculties such as faculties of science, education, psychology, commerce and so forth. The core faculties of UINs and IAINs are *Tarbiyah* (Education), *Syari'ah* (Islamic Law), *Adab* (Humanities), *Usulluddin* (Religious Studies) and *Dakwah* (Proselytisation or Social Works). However, with the application of campus autonomy, subjects offered within each faculty have expanded to include 'secular' sciences such as mathematics, or educational management in the faculty of *Tarbiyah* or added new faculties such as faculties of science, psychology and so forth. Within the *Fakultas Adab*, for example, often non-Islamic subjects such as English and translation are taught as well.
66 Based on the field survey and informal interviews with members of IAIN and UNAIR Muslim students associations on the 20th of April and the 4th of May 2004.

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